

## Standards for Combat Personnel

Combat is obviously difficult physically and emotionally. Each person involved must meet certain standards to help them contribute as an individual and, more importantly, to contribute to the effectiveness of the combat unit. In recent decades there has been increasing societal pressures to lower standards to make everyone appear a winner. This thinking is an unequivocal disaster for combat unit effectiveness—in other words, keeping our soldiers alive.

Many factors have degraded the standards for combat qualification, the most egregious of which has been the demand to make combat roles accessible to women. As you read the following, remember that the lives of the combat unit members and their ability to achieve their mission should be the focus of any military plan or operation. The need for combat effectiveness should override any tendency towards social engineering or similar influences.

In recent years the women's rights movement has erased one of the last barriers in the military and allowed women into front-line combat positions. There is now no role in the military that women are barred from. This development is a result of societal changes where women have become increasingly empowered in our society. This empowerment is the result in a paradigm shift in how society thinks about women and gender roles, and the shift itself has caused social changes – some good, some bad. It's beyond the scope of this introduction to evaluate the relative merit of these changes.

The women's rights movement has been steadfast in their pursuit of removing barriers to women, to unlock career paths that have traditionally been reserved for men. From politics to the surgery theater to the boardroom to the stock exchanges, women have entered domains that were traditionally exclusively male, and done well. The more militant advocates of women's rights look at the military the same way. Experience commanding a combat line unit is essential for an officer seeking promotion beyond a certain level. Operational command rank is predicated upon command of smaller combat units. To rise to be a combat general officer in the Army, you will have had to command a rifle platoon at some point in your career. That is a front-line combat position, with a short life expectancy in combat. Women's rights advocates do not appreciate that military combat positions are inherently different from other positions open to females. This isn't a normal job, and the consequence of opening it to females isn't merely a case of having to dispense with the whiskey and cigars in the boardroom. The consequences of poor performance in a combat role are dead US servicemen and compromised missions, with all that these entail toward ultimately winning wars.

### **Combat vs. non-combat**

Women have been involved in overseas deployments like this since Operation Desert Shield. Their role, however, has been in support or noncombat positions. To be fair, the designation of a combat and a noncombat role has become increasingly blurred over the last few decades. The intensity of combat, the combat-in-depth nature of the battle space, and the realities of counterinsurgency means that there is literally no safe place in

theater. Women can be and have been killed or injured as direct result of enemy action. Even so, there are degrees of safety even in-theater. There's a huge difference between being a woman in a noncombat role who happens to accidentally find herself in a firefight or at the end of an IED in what was considered a safe area and a soldier who actively seeks the enemy for the express purpose of engaging in combat. The work-up necessary for a noncombat position isn't nearly as rigorous as a combat soldier's, as their function in theater isn't significantly different from what they do normally. Mistakes, poor training, lack of focus in a support or noncombat role doesn't have the immediate result of people being killed—as it potentially can in a combat role.

### **Preparing combat units**

In our modern military, combat tasking runs in cycles. A combat team is assembled. Upon notification that it will be deployed into a combat environment, the team begins work-ups; a months-long training regimen to prepare the unit physically and mentally for the combat tasking. Routine medical and dental care is taken care of. Leaves are strictly scheduled so as not to conflict with this work-up. Reassignments are suspended. Members due to separate are extended, encouraged to reenlist, or are exempted from the work-up, as the team is to train like it's expected to fight. There's no value in conducting such training with an individual who may not be able to deploy, or complete the deployment. When the unit is deployed, it's placed in an austere environment that typically lacks comfort, sanitation, facilities, and has minimal routine medical support. Leaves are typically suspended for the duration of the deployment. Upon completion, the unit is rotated stateside and a post-deployment process is performed, consisting of repairing and replacing equipment, catching up on medical issues, counseling, and reintroduction to normal societies, which can be difficult after the intensity of a combat deployment. Unit assignments are adjusted, recruits are introduced, short-timers are separated and the cycle begins all over.

Deployment planning necessarily allows for attrition in the work-up phase. A percentage of soldiers will be undeployable after work-up, due to medical issues, training injuries, or other reasons. This is a normal cost, and key objective, of the work-up phase. The same factors apply to women, and are complicated by higher normal medical requirements than men, and women also get pregnant – particularly in the period of life most represented by our military members. How many women will we have to train to actually deploy one into combat?

### **Health maintenance**

Women are physically different, and have physically different needs than men. Women's health is more high maintenance than men's. The logistical requirements of keeping a woman in combat are higher. As a group, women are physically less adapted to combat than men are. All of these limitations are serious, considering the necessities of a combat soldier that involves extreme physical exertion and physical danger, in an environment where routine medical care simply isn't available. What medical care there is usually at capacity just keeping up with the wear and tear on combat soldiers to keep them in the fight.

## Pregnancy

The equal rights advocates will point out that workplace experience has shown that maternity is insufficient grounds for negatively evaluating a woman's value in the workplace. They fail to understand that combat is not a "workplace." Significant numbers of men deploy leaving a pregnant wife behind. A pregnant service member simply cannot deploy. This is not a job where you can work into your eighth month then return to work six weeks after delivery. It's not a job where someone can fill in during maternity absence. Nor is it a job where you will be home with your baby most nights.

A female in a combat position will necessarily have to be removed from combat as soon as possible after discovering she's pregnant, because pregnancy could exacerbate battlefield injuries. She will likely be undeployable for as much as a year after delivery because of child-care responsibilities and the need to re-qualify and "work up" for a combat deployment. She's out of pocket for the better part of two years, assuming the birth goes well and she's not rendered permanently combat-ineffective by complications. Remember, this built-in, legitimate excuse to not be deployed in a combat role could be exploited by any women who change their mind. And can you imagine the harassment? "Too ugly to get out of combat."

If women are allowed in combat, does this mean that women will be equally eligible for being drafted if there's a national emergency? This makes no sense whatsoever, because any woman will be able to easily get a pregnancy deferral if she chose not to participate.

This is an unacceptable and unnecessary burden to place on a combat unit where training and unit cohesion is a key ingredient. We are not so strapped for manpower that any of this is necessary. This isn't an equal-rights/equal-opportunity issue. Combat is a matter of life and death, physical danger, where compromise gets people killed.

## Morale

Legitimate concerns exist about how the personal interaction between men and women will affect the morale and discipline of the combat unit. Will a platoon commander order a woman to do something that may result in her death or serious injury? Whether he does or doesn't, a case will be able to be made that her being a female affected his decision. There's no place for such second-guessing in combat.

Rape is a constant threat to our soldiers when captured, particularly with our current enemy, regardless of your gender. Lawrence of Arabia was homosexually raped while a captive of the Ottoman Turks in WWI, and the culture in that part of the world has changed very little in that regard. But if a female is taken as a POW, rape is virtually guaranteed. Is this something we find acceptable in order to be politically correct in ensuring that there are no barriers to women in any field?

## Combat Standard's Purpose

Combat standards are designed so the combat effectiveness of a line unit is not compromised. These standards deliberately screen out all but the most physically capable candidates. All participants, regardless of their gender or any other classification, must qualify based on the mission requirements. Combat recruits are trained, and

those who fail to meet the standards are rejected and placed in noncombat roles. For elite units, this selection is so rigorous that a majority of the candidates are washed out. This selection process is not a hazing ritual, but an essential test to ensure that only those who can physically do the job are selected.

The idea that the physical training standards be lowered because the trainee is a woman cannot fly in a combat position. Those standards are there because combat is a tough, competitive, life-and-death endeavor. When you consider women in combat, think about how a woman would do on the offensive line of the Dallas Cowboys – the demands are the same, if not higher, and the stakes are definitely higher. A woman in combat cannot slow down her fellow soldiers. She will have to carry as much, walk as far, run as fast, and be able to meet a man in hand-to-hand combat and win. If she cannot, she has no place in battle. The same is true for men who do not meet standards.

### **Other Limitations**

A woman in combat will have to forgo any concept of modesty. If you have to relive yourself in a firefight, no one is going to politely look away. In Vietnam, long range patrols often returned from the field with their uniforms literally falling off. Marines on such patrol were known to rip the seat out of their trousers because the incessant diarrhea made it to inconvenient to constantly be dropping their pants. Days or weeks may pass without access to running water or a change of clothes. Think about that during a woman's menses, which have special sanitation requirements, and frequently are accompanied by debilitating cramps, tenderness and general discomfort. Is this really something we want to layer on to the rigors of combat?

Soldiers wear their hair extremely short for a reason. Combat lacks sanitation. Parasites and pests are a constant possibility in many countries. Long hair catches and pulls and gets in your eyes and can be used against you in close combat. Since women have so far been in noncombat positions, we've relaxed the grooming standards to allow women to have what would be considered short but stylish hair in civilian circles. But in combat there can be no compromise. There is no justification for women to have a different grooming standard than men in combat position. So cut it high and tight, ladies.

### **Conclusion**

Standards for combat should be immune to modification to meet demographic quotas. Combat is an extremely complex management problem for commanders, which doesn't need to be further complicated with the addition of a class of soldier with different physical needs and unquantifiable social impacts. The US is not in such dire straits that it's necessary to recruit among women to fill our combat needs. Nor is combat a place where we can afford the luxury of being politically correct about gender discrimination.

### **MilitaryValues.org Principles and Mission**

The content of these topical white papers from MilitaryValues.org is aligned with the organization's principles and mission statement. At the core is the protection of America and the founding principles—mainly summarized by freedom and liberty for citizens and a federal government with limited and enumerated powers. All of this is made

abundantly clear in our Constitution and the founder's many writings .The US military's role to protect this is made very clear by the oath that is taken by military officers today:

*"I, [name], do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office upon which I am about to enter. So help me God."*

For details on the MilitaryValues.org principles and mission statement go to [www.MilitaryValues.org](http://www.MilitaryValues.org).

## About MilitaryValues.org

The effectiveness of the United States military has been significantly compromised over the last 20 years by social engineering and politically driven decisions. This is especially true and serious with military units that face front line combat duties. In stark terms, this problem has unnecessarily cost the lives of our front line men and women—while many more suffer various combat-related physical and mental traumas. And there are untold tangents of pain and loss suffered by families, fellow soldiers, and others.

Combat units, and those that support them, greatly benefit from a culture in which there is a focus of effectively prosecuting missions and wars—and rejects unnecessary risk to the military personnel. This culture creates trust and increases effectiveness and loyalty—which is truly critical for the best shot at success in the complex and dangerous endeavor called combat. However on the other hand, if a military is constantly beat down by forces that do not care about its well-being—then a culture of distrust, failure, and despair will increasingly result. This second culture is what we have today in America's military.

MilitaryValues.org exists to educate millions of citizens on what has gone wrong and how it can be reversed. We hope you will continue to our website and learn more!