

Social Experimentation in the Military

By Elaine Donnelly

My subject today is national defense, one of the chief responsibilities of the federal government under the United States Constitution. As you know, Ronald Reagan won both elections as President because he stood for low taxes, less government, and national defenses strong enough to counter what he called the "evil empire."

On the night that Ronald Reagan celebrated his first victory, over President Jimmy Carter, soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines serving on military bases around the world whooped and hollered and celebrated more than anyone else. The reason was that during the Carter Administration, men and women in uniform suffered a great deal from the effects of reduced defense spending, plus the burden of social experimentation that made their job more difficult and more dangerous.

Contrast that jubilant feeling with 1992, when Bill Clinton was elected President. Within days of his election—on Veterans Day, no less—the President-elect announced his intention to lift the ban on homosexuals in the military. It was the first of many times that the new President put political payoffs and ideology ahead of military considerations and showed his lack of understanding and respect for the realities of life in the armed forces.

Instead of putting the needs of the military first, this Administration has been yielding to demands that the armed forces pay any price, and carry any burden, to advance the career ambitions of a few.

That value judgment has consequences, and much of what I will talk to you about today flows from the basic, primary decision to put other considerations ahead of the primary needs of the military.

It's important to remember that as an institution, the armed forces are uniquely vulnerable to social experimentation. All of the uniformed services must follow orders in a chain of command from the President on down, without political dissent. People whose lives are affected by questionable policies are simply not free to defend their own interests.

At the present time, military people in uniform are facing two main problems:

- ① **What is being taken away from the armed forces**, because of severe budget cuts and misdirected priorities, and
- ② **What is being imposed on the military by liberal activists**, within the Pentagon and in the civilian world, in the name of "equal rights."

Much has been said, here at Heritage and on the floor of Congress, about severe budget cuts that are beginning to "hollow out" the volunteer force. Despite the drawdown, deployments are still increasing, often at the behest of the United Nations.

But money alone cannot buy a strong national defense. Technology and hardware are important, but it would be a mistake to focus only on that.

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Wars are deterred, or fought, not by computers and weapons, but by people—young men and women who willingly volunteer to defend their country in spite of great risk and personal sacrifices. We owe these people the best equipment we can afford and a comfortable quality of life, but we must also avoid imposing unnecessary burdens on them that make military life more difficult or more dangerous.

At a time when the forces are drawing down but deployments are being stepped up, sound personnel policies are more important than ever. It is essential that Pentagon officials, both civilian and military, keep their priorities straight.

If a ship's captain turns the wheel off course only two degrees and keeps on going for a long time, he can wind up in the wrong ocean. Several years ago, the personnel policies that govern the military were wrenched off course by a powerful force known as "sexual politics."

The diversion from a steady course occurred in 1991, just prior to the infamous Tailhook convention in Las Vegas, which brought disgrace upon the entire Navy because of the misconduct of a few. In the aftermath of that scandal, and despite a full year's work by the Presidential Commission that studied the issue of women in the armed forces, objective discussion of women in combat became virtually impossible.

We now know that as bad as it was, the worst of Tailhook happened not in the fog of alcohol, but in the cold light of bureaucratic day. For one thing, a disastrous double standard was set in disciplinary matters—men were punished for sexual misconduct, but women were not.

Secondly, Representative Patricia Schroeder and her feminist friends at the Pentagon have used Tailhook—in the tradition of Anita Hill—to advance a political objective. The objective was to repeal the laws exempting women from combat obligations—on land, at sea, and in the air.

Navy Lieutenant Paula Coughlin, a central figure in the Tailhook incident, was one of several women who were allowed to push for repeal of the combat exemptions in the summer of 1991. She was also permitted to lobby Members of Congress while in uniform, despite the normal rules against such activity.

In the aftermath of Tailhook, Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Frank Kelso reversed his stand on women in combat, and the entire issue was framed in terms of women's rights, not national defense. Never mind that Pentagon figures indicate that female officers and enlisted have been promoted at rates equal to or greater than men.

Logic cannot explain the political connection between Tailhook and the drive for women in combat. If violence against women is the problem, putting them in combat is not the answer. Proposing combat duty as the remedy for sexual harassment is like suggesting that street crime is wrong, but organized crime is okay.

Still, some people have been inclined to go along with the idea of women in combat as long as it is voluntary. There is no such thing as "voluntary" combat. The Pentagon has already conceded that if the combat exemptions are repealed, women will have to be assigned in or near combat on an *involuntary* basis.

Furthermore, if women are to be used in combat units, the exemption from Selective Service obligations will be challenged in court, as it was in 1980, when the American Civil Liberties Union challenged women's draft exemption on behalf of men. The Supreme Court ruled that since women are not used in combat, for which draftees are called, draft registration of women is not required.

But if the combat rules are changed, count on the ACLU to bring yet another case on behalf of men challenging women's exemptions from Selective Service registration. This time, they will probably win.

Some of the finest, most professional women in the country are serving in the armed forces today. Because women have always served their country well in noncombat support roles, and we are proud of the job they do, some people say they are inclined to go along with women in combat as long as the qualifying standards are equal.

Because of the unrelenting pressure of sexual politics, however, qualifying standards are simply *not* equal.

Recruiting quotas are forcing the lowering, gender-norming, or redefinition of qualification standards so that women will not fail. Gender-norming is a scoring technique that compensates for physical differences between men by "enhancing" the women's scores. With gender-normed scores in physical training events, an "A" grade for a woman is equivalent to a "D" grade for a man.

Instead of equal performance, equal effort sets the standard, which means that the word "qualified," as in "qualified to do the job," has no objective meaning. The reason is: battlefields are not gender-normed. We cannot assume that for men war is hell, but for women it will only be heck.

It may surprise you to know that there are no objective physical standards that must be met by recruits who apply for heavy-duty jobs, other than a minimal lifting test in the Air Force. An attempt was made by the Pentagon more than a decade ago to establish a system of objective standards, designed to rate the physical demands of each job and match individuals to each one. However, the system was never fully implemented because women had a harder time passing the tests.

An Army official appearing before the Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces said that as many as 40 percent to 50 percent of enlisted women are assigned to jobs beyond their physical ability, and reassignment costs about \$16,000 in retraining costs.

The Presidential Commission compiled abundant evidence that physical strength differences between men and women are considerable. On average, women are known to have 40 percent to 50 percent less upper body strength than males and 25 percent to 30 percent less aerobic capacity—both of which are important for endurance in a combat environment.

We also know that the few women who can compete with men in the lowest percentile ratings cannot improve beyond that level. Men can improve a great deal, however, because of their advantage in muscle mass and size.

Recently, the Army has tried another way to get around these realities by reintroducing co-ed basic training, an experiment that was tried late in the Carter Administration and discontinued because of excessive injuries among the women and lack of challenge among the men.

The key to making co-ed basic training work, as it is now being implemented at Fort Jackson and Fort Leonard Wood, is to redefine "soldierization," take out most of the physical challenges, gender-norm the rest, and replace military concepts such as "cohesion" with a touchy-feely kind of group psychology that makes everyone *feel* good.

And yes, you must have an aggressive public relations campaign, playing to ill-informed reporters who think camouflage face paint is the key to combat readiness.

It may be difficult to understand why highly decorated generals and admirals who run the armed forces would allow standards to be redefined, gender-normed, and lowered for women. The answer, again, has to do with sexual politics—a technique that feminists use to substitute emotion and intimidation for rational debate.

For a visual picture of sexual politics in action, think back to last year, the spring of 1994. Staging a replay of their 1991 march in support of Anita Hill, Representative Patricia Schroeder and a dozen other liberal Congresswomen marched from the House to the Senate to protest the retirement of Admiral Frank Kelso with all four stars.

It didn't matter that Admiral Kelso had given those women everything they wanted as a peace offering for Tailhook. The Congresswomen's performance was so bizarre it should have qualified for a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

The true objective of it was pure sexual politics and intimidation—not just against the hapless Admiral Kelso, but against any admiral or general who would dare stand in the way of the feminist agenda.

Sexual politics sparked another major controversy in the Navy a few months later, making it painfully obvious that anyone who holds military women to the same standard of achievement puts his own career at risk. The number two admiral in the Navy, Admiral Stanley Arthur, was nominated by President Clinton to become Commander in Chief Pacific (CINCPAC). But Admiral Arthur missed out on that promotion, and has recently retired, because he made the political mistake of standing by the principle that female aviators in training should be judged by a single standard.

The controversy began when a female helicopter pilot, who was not doing well in training, charged that she was getting low marks because of retaliation by her instructors after she had filed a successful sexual harassment complaint against one of them. She turned for help to then-Senator David Durenberger (R-MN), who called upon Admiral Arthur, one of the Navy's most distinguished aviators, to review her record.

Knowing that his promotion might be at risk, Admiral Arthur still maintained that she could not fly well enough to win her wings. Senator Durenberger put a hold on the Admiral's nomination, and the No. 1 man in the Navy, Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Jeremy Boorda, folded his cards and allowed the nomination to fail.

The worst part of the story was not the loss of a distinguished four-star Admiral. Rather, the worst of it was and is the lingering message that anyone who holds women to the same standard is putting his career at risk.

Admiral Boorda recently admitted publicly that the Admiral Arthur incident has been the biggest mistake of his career. Nevertheless, evidence is now mounting that even in the dangerous field of combat aviation, some women are simply not being allowed to fail.

Recently, the tragic story of Lieutenant Kara Hultgreen, the female pilot who was killed trying to land an F-14A, broke into the news once again. The real question is, will the Navy be candid and honest about what it is doing to achieve its goals for women in aviation? The perception, and perhaps the reality, of double standards in combat aviation goes beyond one female pilot, to an apparent pattern of special treatment that undermines personal integrity, morale, and the safety of everyone concerned.

The issue here is not women in combat, but the integrity of qualification standards and the selection process.

The question of high standards and equality of treatment has become even more important now that new policies forcing women to serve in or near land combat units were allowed to go into effect last October 1. Of course, the changes were not billed that way. The Pentagon's announcement focused on increased "career opportunities" in units previously closed to women.

The initial plan for women in land combat, as drawn up by civilians who will never see the inside of a fox hole, was leaked to my organization. We released it to the media, and a storm of controversy ensued which forced the Secretary of the Army to tear up the document.

A new version was then released, which leaves out some of the units that were supposed to be opened, such as combat engineering units, multiple-launch rocket systems (MLRS), and special operations helicopters. Air cavalry helicopters remain on the open list, however, which—in the name of "consistency"—may lead to eventual repeal of all the land combat rules in incremental steps.

Never mind that air cavalry helicopters, which do reconnaissance in close tandem with land armor ahead of the front lines, are often shot down. The prevailing bureaucratic logic at work here is that since air cavalry troops end up fighting on the ground only part of the time, it's all right to put women there.

At the same time that land combat rules were redefined and partially repealed, something called the Defense Department Risk Rule was also repealed. This is extremely important because it means that women and young mothers in combat support positions will be sent, on an involuntary basis, much closer to the front lines.

The problem is that in or near close combat units, women don't have an equal opportunity to survive or to help fellow soldiers survive.

The military is unlike any civilian occupation, and unit strength and cohesion are crucial for survival and accomplishment of the mission. Contrary to the popular notion that wars are primarily fought on computer screens these days, soldiers must carry their food, water, ammunition, and weapons with them, under all terrain and weather conditions, for long periods of time. Soldiers can't send their equipment ahead via United Parcel Service.

In recent months, the armed forces' unprecedented social experiment has gathered steam. It is designed to prove feminist theories that men and women are interchangeable in all roles and that it makes no difference who does the soldiering and who does the mothering.

It is now becoming increasingly apparent that the experiment cannot go forward unless certain things happen that are bound to demoralize the military. Lowering physical standards is only part of it.

If you look up the definition of the word *demoralize* in the *American Heritage Dictionary*, you will find it has three meanings. The first is "To undermine confidence or morale." The second is "To disorder, or confuse." The third meaning is "To debase the morals of; to corrupt."

Social experimentation accelerates the demoralization of the military and promises to change the culture in disturbing ways. Plans to put women and mothers in or near combat units amount to an endorsement of violence against women. It signals that in our culture, men will no longer be raised and expected to defend and protect women. By any measure, this is a step backward for civilization, not a step forward.

In today's military, concern for women and children has been strangely redefined. For example, consider the Navy's new policy on pregnancy, which will likely become a prototype for the other services if it is not challenged by Congress.

Incidentally, my frequent comments regarding the Navy are due to the fact that they have taken a clear leadership role in social experimentation. I come from a Navy family; my father was a submariner; and my objective in talking about the Navy is to encourage a constructive return to sound personnel policies in *all* of the services.

On February 6, Navy Secretary John Dalton announced that "pregnancy and parenthood are compatible with a Navy career." There is no doubt that pregnancy is a "natural" event, but whether it is "natural" aboard warships is another question.

It is significant that it makes no difference if the pregnant woman is married or single. Nor is there any requirement to identify the father. By assuming a posture of moral neutrality, the Navy has made a serious value judgment that undermines expectations for professionalism and responsible moral behavior.

In addition to priority medical care ahead of military dependents, pregnant women, who are primarily lower-ranking enlisted women, will have priority off-base housing. The Navy admits that birth control education doesn't work, but its plan is to do more of it.

People in units left short-handed due to pregnancies are forbidden to make any negative comments. This provision is vague but pernicious in its implications. Off limits, for example, would be comments about repeated long-term vacancies that require other crewmembers to work 12-hour double shifts.

Pregnancy tests will not be required just prior to deployment, and there is no indication that women have been or will be fully informed of the risks of birth defects from nuclear power, toxic substances, high-decibel noise, or aviation vibration aboard combat ships.

There are no penalties for repeated pregnancies, which is a replay, of course, of social welfare policies that have failed miserably in the civilian world. When combined with aggressive recruiting quotas for women, the overly generous, morally neutral directives are likely to demonstrate a long-standing principle of government policy: When you subsidize something, you get more of it.

In this case, the "something" is pregnancy among single and married Navy women, who may or may not be available for deployment when the Navy needs them most. That will have a serious negative effect on readiness, as well as a demoralizing effect on the Navy.

The Navy has been trying to downplay the effect on readiness, but the truth has a way of coming out. Take the recent news that five pregnant women were evacuated from the carrier *USS Eisenhower*.

The Center for Military Readiness has learned that the total of pregnant women assigned to the *Ike* is actually 29, and still counting. Fourteen women became pregnant between April 1 and October 1, and ten more in the last three weeks just before the October 20 deployment.

By the time the ship returns, the pregnancy percentage will probably be about 10 percent of the female crew, which was the standard rate during Desert Storm, when women were known to be three to four times as non-deployable as men—not counting those who took discharges. That is a readiness issue!

Morally neutral value judgments are harming the military in other areas as well. Consider the new policy, disclosed by my organization, that some men and women of all ranks are being housed in small tents in Haiti with no privacy between the cots. To varying degrees, this applies to all of the services under the direction of the Army.

An Army spokeswoman, Major Cindy Sito, admitted to *The Washington Times* that the co-habitation policy exists and said the Army wanted its people to be able to "Reach out and touch everybody." The last time I checked, male/female touching was contrary to the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

It also appears that the Pentagon is trying to mislead Congress on its co-ed housing policy. Last September, Defense Secretary William Perry told Senator Strom Thurmond, then ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, that appropriate privacy for men and women would be provided on land, as well as at sea.

If we are spending millions to restructure combat ships for the private accommodation of women, why do people serving on land have any less right to reasonable accommodations for privacy?

Please keep in mind that if experiments with small unisex tents can be declared a big success, it will be a prototype for all the services in the future. Furthermore, if sexual privacy doesn't matter with regard to men and women, then what is the problem with housing together homosexuals and heterosexuals?

I am sorry to tell you that the campaign to lift the ban on homosexuals in the military has not stopped, despite Congress's action in 1993 to codify the ban. The issue remains unresolved because the policy has become schizophrenic under the Clinton Administration.

For one thing, Defense Department regulations are in conflict with the law. Legislative history of the 1993 statute says that homosexuality is "incompatible with military service" and lists a dozen reasons why homosexuality creates "an unacceptable risk to the high standards of morale, good order and discipline, and unit cohesion that are the essence of military capability."

On the other hand, the Defense Department regulations declare, without authorization in the law or legislative history, that "Sexual orientation is a personal and private matter" and "homosexuality is not a bar to entry or continued military service." That concept, which is at the heart of the President's "don't ask, don't tell" policy, was specifically *rejected* by Congress. It is based on the legally questionable notion that "status" as a homosexual can be separated from "conduct."

The contradiction is easy to exploit in court, which is why several lower court judges have tried to declare it unconstitutional.

The Defense Department's flawed and inconsistent regulations, combined with the Department of Justice's failure to provide an adequate defense of the law in court, could result in a catastrophic loss before the Supreme Court. The Administration would be delighted, of course, if the Supreme Court did the work for them, making it possible for the President to deliver on his campaign promise to homosexuals despite the exclusion law passed by Congress in 1993.

Senator Dan Coats, who chairs the Senate Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee, announced recently that he will take appropriate action to correct the problem. In the meantime, the Clinton Administration is continuing to promote the idea that "sexual minorities" should be understood and supported as part of our nation's "diversity."

On September 8 of last year, the Department of Defense and several other government agencies devoted tax dollars and “company” time to something called the “Diversity Day Training Event.” Six commands of the Navy were particularly prominent in the planning of the event, and two uniformed admirals welcomed participants.

Most of the sessions were noncontroversial, but the centerpiece of the event was a workshop on “sexual minorities” conducted by trainers from GLOBE—Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Employees. During that session, a video called *On Being Gay* was presented, featuring a young homosexual man describing and asking for acceptance of his sexual lifestyle.

You should also know that despite Congress’s enactment of a law banning homosexuality from the military, training sessions promoting “sensitivity” to homosexuals are currently being presented on military bases— one of them taking place, I’ve been told, in an Army chapel at Fort Lewis, Washington.

Speaking of insults to persons of Judeo-Christian values, I must tell you how far some Pentagon leaders will go to stifle dissent about social engineering in the military and to rewire the values of those who serve.

Some months ago, Navy Lieutenant Commander Ken Carkhuff, who led a helicopter squadron, learned that his unit was to be among the first to include women on the combat mission to Haiti. Prior to that mobilization, he felt honor-bound to tell his commanding officer, in a private, informal setting, that he could not support the Navy’s policy on women in combat.

Lieutenant Commander Carkhuff said that the policy conflicted with his Christian beliefs because it boils down to an official and deliberate endorsement of wartime violence against women. Carkhuff did not say that he would not lead the squadron; nor did he disobey an order.

Nevertheless, within days, the Navy began proceedings to separate him “for cause,” charging him with failure of leadership and dereliction of duty. Next month, Carkhuff will face a Board of Inquiry to show why he should not be expelled from the Navy. The fact that he is a graduate of the Naval Academy with 13 years of exemplary service, and is only two years short of early retirement with five children to support, seems to be of no consequence.

As soon as Carkhuff expressed his personal views in private, glowing fitness reports that described him as a “community superstar” with “unlimited potential... destined for command and beyond” were downgraded to ruinous levels. A revised fitness report asserted flatly that “Lt. Cdr. Carkhuff’s stated beliefs are NOT COMPATIBLE WITH FURTHER MILITARY SERVICE.” (Emphasis in original.)

Think about what that means. If the Navy succeeds in firing Lieutenant Commander Carkhuff at the Board of Inquiry hearing late in May, they will be conveying the devastating message that the Navy does not want or need persons of Judeo-Christian values.

But the armed forces *depend* on people like Lieutenant Commander Carkhuff, and the families that support them, to volunteer for military service. Why is the Navy driving these people away in pursuit of social experimentation in the military? And, by the way, what will the services do with the time-honored ideal of an “officer and a gentleman?”

By contrast, a similar Board of Inquiry recently allowed Navy Lieutenant Zoe Dunning to stay in the Navy, even though she admits to being a lesbian. And Navy Lieutenant Tracy Thorne, an avowed homosexual, was recently awarded a Navy Achievement Medal in a ceremony at Naval Air Systems Command in Arlington.

How did we get to the point where tolerance of homosexuality is encouraged but adherence to Christian values is punished by the military?

It's been said that the armed forces lead the way for social change and the civilian world follows. Positive changes have been achieved in the past, but where is the military leading us now? And how much social experimentation will men and women in uniform withstand without walking away?

We cannot afford to lose good people because of personnel policies that defy the experience of history and undermine readiness and morale for the sake of social engineering. In 1933, General Douglas MacArthur said this about the importance of morale in the armed forces:

[Morale] can survive and develop in adversity that comes as an inescapable incident of service, but it will quickly wither and die if soldiers come to believe themselves the victims of indifference or injustice on the part of their government, or of ignorance, personal ambition, or ineptitude on the part of their military leaders.

Today, a combination of indifference, ignorance, and political influences that conflict with military values is making military life more difficult and more dangerous.

One of the most compelling witnesses who testified before the Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces was David Horowitz, who became a "born-again American" after many years of militant activism as a radical leftist youth. Horowitz, who co-authored the book *Destructive Generation—Second Thoughts About the '60s*, told the Commission that:

The military is one American institution that survived the '60's intact. Now it threatens to become a casualty of current radical fashions. The worst crimes of our century have been committed by idealists attempting to eradicate injustice, stamp out politically incorrect attitudes, and revamp human nature. *Let's not add the weakening of America's military to the depressing list of disastrous utopias that fail.*

In all of the focused debate over terms of the Contract with America, we cannot afford to ignore what is happening to our military. It is the only military we have, and it deserves close attention.

Just because a pot is on the back burner doesn't mean it can't boil over. Congressional review of the personnel issues is long overdue, and I hope you will join me in insisting that hearings take place as soon as possible.

We must insist that the virtues and values that lives depend on in the military not be corrupted for the sake of political expediency. Double standards and favoritism must be ended, and the Departments of Defense and Justice must be required to follow the letter and intent of the law.

Because lives are at stake, debate and the process of evaluation must be open and honest. If people in uniform cannot speak for themselves, in defense of their own interests, then we must speak for them. If we don't, who will?

We must insist on a military that is governed not by political pressure groups, but by sound principles that protect readiness, justice and equal treatment, and integrity in leadership.

Achieving these goals will not be easy, but our constitutional responsibilities require no less. We have the finest military in the world—and a responsibility to keep it that way.