

GI JANE

In today's society, with affirmative action full out in most industries and businesses, and the equal rights movement having made great progress; there is finally a snag in the nylons of woman activists. The question of whether women should have to serve in combat is upon us. And I am all too happy to give my whole hearted no.

If you have kept up with the news in recent years, women have been fighting their way into the top military academies, the Citadel being the most recent case. These women have claimed being just as tough as men, which is scientifically incorrect, but hey it's a defense. They have, through grueling court battles, made their way into the elite schools of our great military, where our best men have been serving us for generations. While claiming to be every bit as good as the men, they have for a most part failed once they got in. Ms. Faulkner won her legal battle to enter the Citadel, breaking a 152 year tradition of training men only. On August 14, 1995, during her first day of military training, she collapsed from heat exhaustion. Within days, she abruptly withdrew from the college, forced to admit that she could not withstand the rigors of "hell week." Ms. Faulkner, fighting back tears, explained that two and a half years of stress had "all crashed in" on her in the first days there. After not quite making the cut, and surviving the stress and trials of these places, they say that it is because the men were too hard on them. "Too hard" is not a valid sentence in the military, you are either tough enough or you fail.

I am not a sexist, don't get me wrong. I know many women who are my intellectual superiors whom I admire. I have even met a few that I probably would not want to mess with. What I am trying to show is that while in some cases they can function in combat; they are, for the most part, detrimental to military efficiency.

Chairman of the Department of Military Science at the University of Michigan, who conducted a test of Army officer candidates, and found that: The top 20 percent of women at West Point achieved scores on the Army Physical Fitness Test equivalent to the bottom 20 percent of male cadets. Only seven percent of women can meet a score of 60 on

the push-up test, while 78 percent of men exceed it. A 20- to 30-year-old woman has the same aerobic capacity as a 50-year-old man. Only one woman out of 100 could meet a physical standard achieved by 60 out of 100 men. Women by nature are smaller and slower, and have 40% less upper body strength.

Those statistics being fresh in your mind I would like to give a few examples of women in combat from a government report on women in combat. The day before the Feb. 24, 1991, assault by U.S. ground forces in the Gulf War, CNN focused international attention on Army Maj. Marie Rossi because of her status as one of the first women helicopter pilots to fly in a combat zone. Just a few days after CNN televised the Rossi story she was dead, she flew the helicopter into a 375-foot microwave tower in Northern Saudi Arabia, killing herself and all her crew. Lt. Kara Hultgreen, 29, who was the first woman to fly an F-14 fighter and one of two women who qualified for navy carrier operations, crashed into the sea and was killed in October 1994 while attempting a daylight landing on the carrier USS Abraham Lincoln. Her navigator pilot ejected, he was fast enough, she wasn't.

There is much justifiable concern about the high probability that all females captured by the enemy will be sexually violated and raped. Army Major Rhonda Cornum, captured when her helicopter was shot down over Iraq, initially told the press she was treated "exactly the same" as male prisoners during her brief captivity, only to recant a year later. Maj. Cornum admitted that both she and the other captured U.S. woman prisoners were sexually violated by the Iraqis, a fact the Pentagon had also kept secret for a year. She told the commission that being raped by the enemy should be considered "an occupational hazard of going to war."

Regardless of claims to the contrary, rape is "gender specific" and has never been

an "occupational hazard" for combat pilots or any other men associated with combat duty

until now.

Women may have a spot in the military, but as we have seen combat is not the place for them to be.

Works Cited

Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces, Report to the President, November 15, 1992, pp.24-27, 36-37.

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