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WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES MILITARY:  
A CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE

by

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**A CONTEMPORARY VIEW**

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This paper presents a contemporary view of women in the armed forces of the United States. It is divided into five major parts.

Chapter II, Unprecedented Presence of Women in the American Military, begins with a brief, historical look at the role of women in the military and then presents a present-day perspective of the dramatic changes which have affected women in the U.S. armed forces in the past decade and a half. The chapter next presents a 1985 view of the presence of women in the U.S. armed forces. The major conclusion of Chapter II is that the current presence of women in the American military is unprecedented in historical or modern times.

Chapter III, Pressure to Expand the Presence of Women in the U.S. Military, suggests that three pragmatic reasons--decrease in the future youth population, decline in the jobless rate, and the economic benefits which accrue from recruiting women, will affect the presence of women in the American military in the years ahead. The major conclusion of this chapter is that due to the effects of these three pragmatic factors, it is likely that the U.S. will experience increasing pressure to expand the presence of women in the armed forces of the United States.

Chapter IV, Combat Exclusionary Laws and Policies, begins with a review of the provisions of existing U.S. laws and

policies which currently prohibit women from serving in combat roles. The chapter next examines two considerations--the numbers, skills, positions, and locations in which military women currently serve, and the anticipated type of future U.S. war-fighting--to determine whether these combat exclusionary laws and policies should be maintained. The major conclusion of Chapter IV is that the existing U.S. combat exclusionary provisions should be repealed.

Chapter V, Women in Combat, begins by presenting the assertion that to date there are no persuasive reasons to believe that women will not perform effectively in a combat environment. This assertion is then examined from three perspectives. First, the tests and evaluations which have been conducted concerning women in the military are reviewed. Second, the attitudes against the idea of women in combat are analyzed. Third, the traditional arguments against the notion of women in combat are examined. The major conclusion of this chapter is that although strongly-held attitudes against women in combat persist, there exists no persuasive evidence to suggest that women will not perform effectively in combat roles.

Chapter VI, Summary, reviews the major conclusions of the previous chapters. In light of all the evidence which has been presented and reviewed, we should at this point proceed with confidence to further integrate women in the armed forces of the United States. The major conclusion of Chapter VI is that it is now, at a time when the United States is generally at peace, that

we should begin the further integration of women in the military  
to include serving in combat roles.

## CHAPTER II

### UNPRECEDENTED PRESENCE OF WOMEN IN THE AMERICAN MILITARY

#### Historical Perspective.

From a historical perspective, military service, and in particular combat, has been a predominantly male experience. For the five thousand years or so that we know about, women were not only excluded from combat, but this exclusion was accepted as right and natural.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, most present-day discussions concerning the issue of women in the American military begin in a manner very similar to earlier discussions concerning the participation of blacks in the military. A series of legendary tokens from each war is introduced in an attempt to somehow imply that such military participation, by blacks or by women, has been part of our national tradition rather than some drastic departure from the American experience. For example, Christopher Attucks is an illustration of black participation in the American Revolution while Molly Pitcher is seen as the woman of the American Revolution.<sup>2</sup> While these legendary tokens serve a purpose, it is important that we not let them obscure the reality of the fact that military service, and especially combat, has been a uniquely male experience in the United States and indeed throughout most of the world.

Still, there have been notable exceptions. For example, both the Soviet Union and Israel have employed women in combat in recent times, and when employed, women have consistently fought

with distinction.<sup>3</sup> During World War II, Russia, driven by severe personnel shortages and fighting for its very life within its own borders, conscripted over 800,000 women; 500,000 of these women served at the front lines in both combat and combat support roles. Women constituted approximately eight percent of the Soviet Union's combatants in World War II, and they served successfully as pilots, aircraft crew members, snipers, machine gunners, infantrywomen, and tankers.<sup>4</sup> Since that time the Soviet Union has not allowed military women to hold combat positions, and at present women constitute a little over two percent of the Soviet armed forces and serve only in traditional roles such as medical, administrative, communications, and other support positions.

Similarly, Israel in 1948, threatened by invasion from three directions, conscripted approximately 12,000 women in a military force of over 108,000. Most women served in support roles, but some women served in the infantry, artillery, and tank corps. Other Israeli women were directly involved in street fighting and guerilla warfare. Only after the tide of the war turned toward the Israelis' favor were women removed from their direct fighting roles. Since that time, contrary to much popular opinion, Israeli women have not served in combat units. Women presently in the Israeli armed forces serve in a separate part of the military with the primary function of releasing a larger number of male soldiers to fight.<sup>5</sup>

Although these notable, historic exceptions are certainly relevant to any informed discussion of women in the military, they cannot obscure the incontrovertible fact that military service has traditionally been a predominantly male preserve, and the pattern has been ubiquitous. The soldiers of Moses, Pericles, Darius, Alexander, Caesar, Genghis Khan, Charlemagne, Wellington, and Washington were male only. The same has held true in primitive tribes throughout the world, across time.<sup>6</sup>

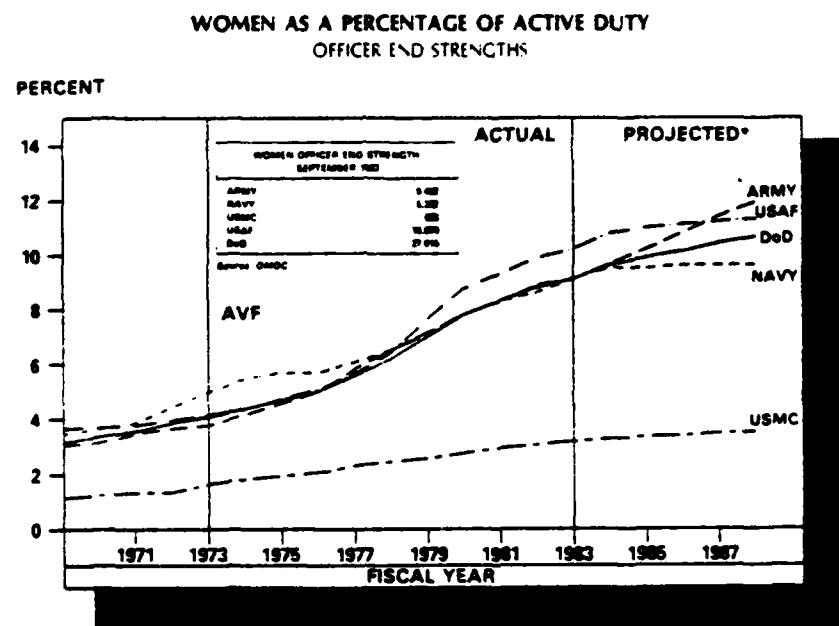
History has shown that women in military service, particularly combat, are the exception to what has traditionally been an otherwise exclusively male experience. When women have participated in combat, they have generally done so only when their nation has faced severe personnel shortages or when they have been called upon to fight in the defense of their homeland.

#### Present-day Perspective.

Why is this brief, illustrative look at the historical role women in the military important? It is important primarily because it serves to highlight and place in perspective the uniqueness of the role currently played by women in the American military. It is safe to assert at this point that the present presence of women in the armed forces of the United States is virtually unprecedented not only in recent times but also in recorded history. If the subject of women in the military were raised even as recently as twenty years ago in the United States, it is quite unlikely that the topic would have generated much national interest at all. It certainly would not have engendered

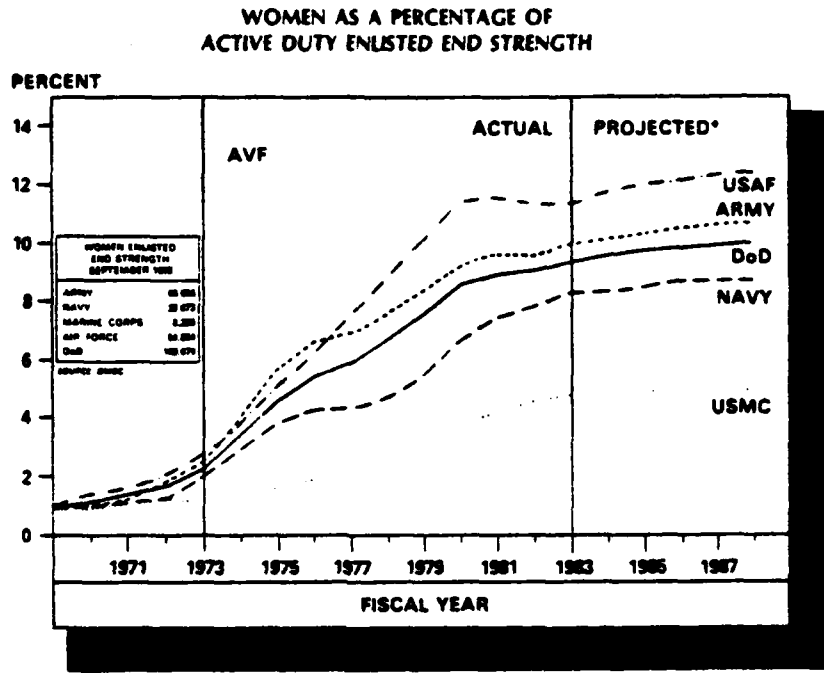
the often intense, emotional debate which frequently accompanies the subject today. Since women accounted for less than 1.3 percent of the military in 1965, it is easy to understand why. This is certainly not the case today. As is shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2, end strengths of officer and enlisted women in the American military have increased steadily and dramatically since the end of the 1960's.

FIGURE 17



The current presence of women in the American military has grown to such a degree that it is not an overstatement to suggest, as some have done, that the issue of women in the American military today is one which presently tears at the "moral fabric of our

FIGURE 29



\*PROJECTIONS BASED ON FY 1985 PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

There is a tendency among many people today to view this issue of women in the military with what might be described as a present-day perspective, focusing only on the present status of women within the defense establishment without considering the dramatic advances made by women within the short time frame of last fifteen years or so. Although this present-day perspective may be understandable, if not justified, it serves to explain why many individuals feel the debate over the role of women in the military has run its course and no longer contains a sufficient degree of momentum to justify continuation of the discussion.



One critic has pondered why "anyone would seek to add a single syllable to this deeply emotional, frequently acrimonious discussion."<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, it appears that the issue of women in the military continues to be very much alive in 1985, and, in spite of the volume of material which has been devoted to analyzing this broad topic, it remains unresolved and a very topical subject for discussion and analysis. The issue of women in the military seems to continue to generate a considerable amount of heated debate within the public policy establishment, the military services and departments, the academic community, and among social commentators. Because so many people tend to view women in the military with this present-day perspective, it might be very useful to pause and briefly review some of the major events which have lead to the present expanded role of women in the American military. In this way we might gain an increased understanding of the recent historical underpinnings of the current debate to see how the Executive, Congressional, and the Judicial systems within the United States have moved to eliminate or reduce many of the barriers which have faced women in the armed services.

#### A Decade and a Half of Dramatic Changes.

Without question, the two significant events which have most dramatically affected the role of women in the military within the past decade and a half were the Congressional passage of the Equal Rights Amendment and a decision by the Executive branch to end conscription and establish an all- volunteer

military force in the United States. These two significant events occurred very early in the period under question, and they marked the beginning of what has been a dramatic and steady expansion of the presence of women in the armed forces of the United States. It was not until early in 1981 that we saw even a possible hint that there might be some limit to the significant expansion of the number of women in the armed forces. Table I serves to highlight the major events which have led to an expanded presence of women in the American military within the past decade and a half.

TABLE I

A DECADE AND A HALF OF DRAMATIC CHANGES

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<u>1967</u>	PASSAGE OF PUBLIC LAW 90-130
<u>1972</u>	ERA SENT BY CONGRESS TO STATES FOR RATIFICATION
<u>1973</u>	ELIMINATION OF THE DRAFT ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE
<u>1975</u>	PASSAGE OF THE STRATTON AMENDMENT
<u>1978</u>	OWENS VS. BROWN RULING
<u>1980</u>	PRESIDENT SEEKS AUTHORITY TO REGISTER MEN <u>AND</u> WOMEN PASSAGE OF DOPMA
<u>1981</u>	ROSTKER VS. GOLDBERG RULING SERVICES ANNOUNCE PLANS TO HALT INCREASES IN THE NUMBER OF WOMEN IN THE MILITARY

1967. It was only eighteen years ago that the Congress passed and the President signed Public Law 90-130 which repealed, at the request of the Defense Department, the 1948 Women's Armed Services Integration Act. Following the end of World War II, Congress had enacted legislation which set forth the post-war guidelines for the participation of women in the American military. It was clear that the Congressional intent at the time was that this participation would be minimal. This 1948 legislation established a two percent ceiling on the number of female enlisted personnel who would be allowed to serve in the military and ten percent of enlisted personnel as the ceiling for female officers. Additionally, this legislation had mandated that the highest military rank which a female officer could hold was a Commander (U.S. Navy) or Lieutenant Colonel (all other services). The 1967 passage of Public Law 90-130 therefore eliminated, at least as a matter of law, these very restrictive prohibitions to an expanded role of women in the military. Additionally, this public law was the first major policy change affecting women in the military since the enactment of the Integration Act. The signing of this legislation was especially significant because it was the initial step in what was to become a progression of events which has led the United States to quintuple the number of women in the military since 1967 while reducing the male strength by about one third.<sup>11</sup> President Johnson signed this legislation in November 1967 with the observation that "there is no reason why we should some day

not have a female Chief of Staff or even a female Commander-in-Chief."<sup>12</sup>

1972. The next major event which was to have a significant impact on all women in the United States, and certainly women in the military, was the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Almost fifty years after its initial introduction, a proposed amendment to the Constitution providing that "equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States of any State on account of sex" was sent by the Congress to the states for ratification.<sup>13</sup> The basic principle on which the Equal Rights Amendment rested was that gender should not be a factor in determining legal rights of either men or women. This constitutional amendment required ratification by thirty eight state legislatures within a seven year time period before the amendment would become part of the U.S. Constitution. It is likely that this amendment, if enacted, would have served to eliminate all existing sex discrimination within the military to include draft registration, the combat exclusion for women, and all other military policies which were applied differently to males than to females.

The Equal Rights Amendment, controversial to this day, gained extremely rapid, initial momentum and received ratification from twenty-two state legislatures in 1973, but the momentum quickly slowed. In the following four years, only three state legislatures ratified the amendment in 1974, one in 1975, and one in 1977. Additionally, four state legislatures had voted

to rescind their earlier approval. It quickly seemed that the once bright future of the Equal Rights Amendment suddenly looked dim. Some observers have suggested that one plausible explanation for its stalling across the country may have been the realization by the American people that passage of the ERA would likely mandate the full integration of women in the military, a concept presumably some Americans might not have yet been ready to fully embrace.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps sensing the impact of this realization on the likelihood of the ERA's passage, Senator Sam Ervin made a gallant and predictably colorful attempt to modify the Equal Rights Amendment by proposing that "this amendment shall not impair the validity, however, of any laws of the United States or any State which exempt women from service in combat units of the Armed Forces."<sup>15</sup> Senator Ervin argued passionately and in consonance with rhetoric which would reappear in subsequent debates that the ERA should be modified to:

prevent sending the daughters of America into combat, to be slaughtered or maimed by the bayonets, the bombs, the bullets, the grenades, the mines, the napalm, the poison gas, and the shells of the enemy.<sup>16</sup>

Senator Ervin, in presenting his fervent opposition to an expanded role of women in the military, gave the Senate the opportunity to reaffirm existing law and policy excluding women from combat, but the Senate defeated this proposed modification by a vote of 71 to 18. Certainly one plausible interpretation of this resounding defeat of the Ervin proposed modification to the ERA was that the Congress was not opposed to considering a

possible expanded role for women in the military. Although the Equal Rights Amendment, dramatically slowed following its initial wide-spread successes, appeared not to have generated sufficient momentum to guarantee the ratification by the required thirty-eight state legislatures, it nevertheless had a major and lasting impact on rekindling the debate surrounding the expansion of women's roles within the military services.

1973. Of equal importance to the impact of the Equal Rights Amendment was the elimination of the draft in the United States and the associated establishment of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF). Shortly after President Nixon assumed office, he established what became known as the Gates Commission which concluded that the national defense interests of the United States could be better served by the establishment of a volunteer military force. The committee recommended that the President put an end to conscription and establish the AVF beginning in 1973. It is interesting to note that nowhere in the Gates Commission report did the study group specifically address a possible expanded role which might be played in the future by women within the armed forces. The Department of Defense, however, in anticipation of the end of conscription, established a Central All-Volunteer Force Task Force which was tasked, among other responsibilities, to provide a contingency for meeting AVF objectives by increasing the use of women to offset any shortages of men.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, the House Armed Services Special Subcommittee on

the Utilization of Manpower in the Military gave added impetus to the Central AVF Task Force when the subcommittee reported:

We are convinced that in the atmosphere of a zero draft or an all-volunteer military force, women could and should play a more important role. We strongly urge the Secretary to develop a program which will permit women to take their rightful places in serving in our Armed Forces.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, the two major cards had now been played--the Equal Rights Amendment and the All-Volunteer Force--and these factors would continue to provide impetus to the continued expansion of the presence of women in the American military.

1975. If the decisive defeat of the Ervin amendment in 1972 indicated at least the possibility that the Congress was collectively, if only semi-consciously, reevaluating the future role of women in the armed forces, then the 1975 passage of the so-called Stratton Amendment to Title 10 of the U.S. Code represented an even stronger message. In this legislation Congress provided for the admission of women to the previously all-male service academies. During extensive Congressional testimony, the military services predictably opposed passage of this amendment. The primary thrust of their arguments revolved around the fact that the unique mission of each of the service academies was to educate and train the future **combat** leaders of the armed forces, and the will of the American people, as expressed by Congressional intent, was that women were to be excluded from combat. Generally representative of the Pentagon's line of argument was testimony provided by General Fred C. Weyand, then Vice Chief of Staff of the Army.

The issue of whether women should become cadets at West Point is tied directly to the basic question of whether Americans are prepared to commit their daughters to combat....The Military Academy has, indeed, the distinctive and necessary mission of educating and training [and] preparing...officers for combat roles. As long as it is the desire of our people, expressed through the Congress, that women not be employed in combat roles or positions, it seems to me that it would be a waste of a scarce and costly resource to divert any of the Academy's capability to a secondary and lesser mission.<sup>19</sup>

The Stratton Amendment to permit women to enter the service academies nevertheless passed in the House by a vote of 303 to 96 and in the Senate by a voice vote. Women were, therefore, for the first time in a position to enter each of the service academies beginning in the summer of 1976 as part of the Class of 1980.

1978. An important judicial case affecting directly the U.S. Navy, but also sending a signal to the other services, was the 1978 Owens vs. Brown case heard in Washington by Judge John J. Sirica. This class action suit charged discrimination in that the Navy's existing combat restrictions unconstitutionally denied equal protection under the law to women in the Navy, specifically by disallowing women the "right" to serve aboard naval vessels. Judge Sirica's decision stated that the Navy could no longer use this statute as the sole basis for excluding women from serving aboard Navy ships. Congress quickly responded to this judicial mandate by amending Section 6015, Title 10, U.S. Code to allow the Navy to assign women to hospital ships, transport ships, and other naval vessels which the Navy did not expect to receive combat missions. The Navy was also given the



authority to assign women to serve aboard other Navy ships for a period not to exceed six months of temporary duty.

1980. Early in 1980, President Carter, an ardent supporter of the Equal Rights Amendment, announced his intention to reinstitute a program requiring individuals between the ages of 19 and 20 (and the following year all 18 year-olds) to register with the Selective Service Commission, although he emphasized that this was only a contingency measure designed to support rapid mobilization should the future need ever arise. Ending long and at times heated speculation, President Carter also announced his decision to request Congressional authority to include women along with men in this mandatory registration program. His outspoken advocacy of the ERA made this decision his only tenable position. He stated:

My decision is a recognition of the reality that both women and men are working members of our society. It confirms what is already obvious...that women are now providing all types of skills in every profession. The military should be no exception.<sup>20</sup>

It should be noted that President Carter in making this announcement added that he had no intention of sending American women into combat. Congress later decided to go against the desires of President Carter, and it subsequently mandated that only men would be required to register with the Selective Service Commission.

Another important barrier which affected women in the military was removed in the final days of the Carter administration. Following almost seven years of discussion in the

Congress, debate which vacillated between heated discussion and genuine disinterest due primarily to the immense complexity and size of the legislation, Congress enacted the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) which was to take effect in 1981. This important legislation which affected all services within the Department of Defense served to establish uniformity in the laws and provisions which pertained to the appointment, promotion, separation, and retirement of regular commissioned officers. More specifically, this legislation standardized the treatment prescribed by law for all male and female military officers.

1981. Two important events occurred in 1981 which had an important impact on women in the military, and both of these events were the first indication of a possible limitation to the steadily increasing presence of women in the military. First, the judiciary again addressed the issue of integration of women in the military in the case of Rostker vs. Goldberg. In this case, the Supreme Court was faced with a decision regarding whether both men and women should be required to register for possible military conscription or whether, as desired by Congress, only men should be required to register for possible future conscription. The Supreme Court decided that the Constitution did not establish any limitation to the selective registration of only men for possible military conscription. In expressing the court's opinion that women would not be required

to register for a possible future draft, Justice William H. Rehnquist wrote for the majority:

In most instances the court must defer to Congress' constitutional duty to "raise and support armies" and "provide and maintain a navy". The court has the power to overturn laws pertaining to the military, but the draft registration statute is not one of them.<sup>21</sup>

A second important event affecting women in the military in 1981 was led by the U.S. Army and subsequently endorsed by the other services. The first real indication that the services were contemplating a slow-down, a decision which has been referred to as "Womanpause '81", came in a speech by then Army Chief of Staff Edward C. Meyer when he announced that the Army had decided to hold the percentage of women where it was at the time, at approximately 8.9 percent.<sup>22</sup> General Meyer stated:

I have decided to call a pause to further increases in the number of Army women. We will continue to recruit women at a rate sufficient to sustain the current level of 65,000 women in the coming year. During this pause, an in-depth policy review of all the attendant issues will be conducted. I'm simply not certain...that the policies we have gradually arrived at [are] appropriate to a war-fighting army.<sup>23</sup>

By the end of 1981 it was clear that all of the services shared some of the concerns of the Army Chief of Staff. Accordingly, the Department of Defense seemed to feel that the start of the Reagan administration was a propitious time to reassess the goals concerning the number of women in the military which had been initially formulated by President Carter. Dr. Lawrence Korb, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, attempted to explain the impact of the Defense Department's decision when he stated:

Past female recruiting goals were based largely on theoretical models. What's happened is now we have some experience. I think it's an appropriate time, at the beginning of an administration when you are having a force expansion, changing doctrine, to take a look and say, okay, let's stop and see if these models should be changed.<sup>24</sup>

This important decision, at the very early stages of the new Reagan administration, marked the first indication of a possible slow-down in the rapid expansion of women in the U.S. military which had begun in the early 1970's as the Equal Rights Amendment showed promise and the All-Volunteer Force was just getting underway. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the Reagan administration was not seeking to reverse earlier gains made by women in the military. Instead the Department of Defense was only scaling back what it considered to be ambitious goals set by the previous administration. Under President Reagan, the number of women in the military increased from 171,000 to 202,200 with projections of 215,000 in fiscal year 1986. Dr. Korb, attempting to reassure women in the military of the importance of the role they play within the defense establishment, asserted that the Reagan administration remains committed to increasing the number of women in the military, although at a rate which would not be as dramatic as in the years since the beginning of the All-Volunteer Force. Korb indicated that "we expect the percentage of women to go up by a couple of points in the next two years."<sup>25</sup>

Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger expressed his support

for women in the military in a 1983 memorandum for the secretaries of the military departments. Weinberger wrote:

In recent weeks, reports in the news media have questioned the Department of Defense policy for utilization of military women. Some of these reports give the impression that we have changed our policy and that women now have less opportunity to contribute to the defense of our nation. To make sure that our policy is clearly established and understood, I want to state it again. It is the policy of this Department that women will be provided full and equal opportunity with men to pursue appropriate careers in the military services for which they can qualify.<sup>26</sup>

"Womanpause '81" should not serve to obscure the significant expansion made by women in the military in the previous decade and a half. It is appropriate at this point to take a look at the results of all these increases. Where are women in the U.S. military in 1985?

#### Women in the U.S. Military Today.

The U.S. armed forces have in 1985 more female members than any other nation in the world--both in actual numbers and in percentages. We presently have more women in the military than all the Warsaw Pact states combined, and we have approximately fifteen times more women in our military forces than the Soviet Union has in theirs.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, the American military has been transformed into a fighting force with more women in combat-related positions than any other country in the world.<sup>28</sup>

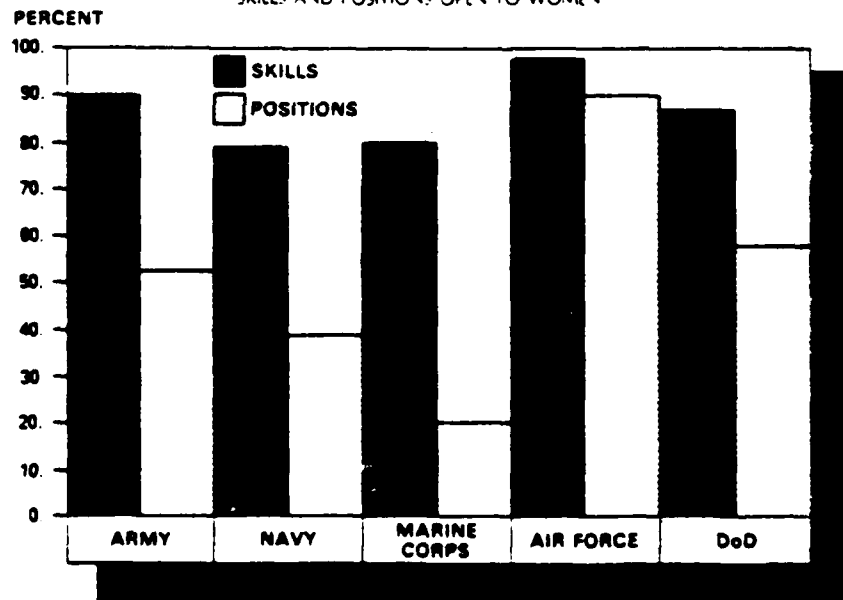
This expansion of women in the American military has not only been in terms of numbers and the associated percentages of women in the armed services. Perhaps equally important has been that the role of women in the military has dramatically changed

from that of filling gaps in male recruiting to sharing in the responsibility of staffing all positions, except, as we shall see later, those specifically precluded by existing federal law policy. Figure 3 depicts the officer and enlisted career opportunities currently available to women in the military.

As can be seen, the percentages of skills and positions open to women at the present time vary among the individual services, but across the Department of Defense approximately ninety percent of the skills and sixty percent of the positions are currently available to women in the military. The dramatic advances made by women in the military in the past two decades has left women in the American military in a position which is generally unprecedented in historical or modern times. As we shall see next, "Womanpause '81" notwithstanding, it is very likely that these advances will continue in the future.

FIGURE 3<sup>29</sup>

OFFICER AND ENLISTED CAREER OPPORTUNITIES  
SKILLS AND POSITIONS OPEN TO WOMEN



## CHAPTER III

### PRESSURE TO EXPAND THE PRESENCE OF WOMEN IN THE U.S. MILITARY

#### Increasing Pressure.

There is every reason to believe that the increasing presence of women in the U.S. military will continue in the foreseeable future, not as the result of any deep commitment to equal rights or equal responsibilities, not as the result of the increasing political clout of women in the United States, but directly for three pragmatic reasons. The numbers and trends speak very clearly, and it is likely that there will continue to be increasing pressure to expand the number, roles, and locations in which women in the U.S. armed forces perform their military duties. Ignoring the numbers and future demographic trends would be the virtual equivalent of accepting the failure of the All-Volunteer Force concept, in the United States, a concept already described by some as on the "ragged edge of survival."<sup>1</sup> It is likely that there will be increasing pressure to expand the presence of women in the military for the following three pragmatic reasons:

1. Decrease in the future youth population
2. Decline in the jobless rate
3. Economic benefits which accrue from recruiting women

#### Decrease in the Future Youth Population.

There is little question that the size of the youth cohort in the United States is expected to significantly decrease during

the next two decades. This is due to the sharp decrease in the birth rate in the 1960's as compared to earlier decades. Succinctly put, the decrease in the size of the future youth population is a direct result of the fact that fewer women had babies in the 1960's.<sup>2</sup> The 18-21 year old youth cohort, the prime target for military recruiters, is expected to decline from approximately 12.3 % of the current labor force to approximately 9.5 % in 1990, with a further decline expected in the late 1990's.<sup>3</sup> The obvious result of this decrease in the size of the youth cohort is that the pool of available 18-year olds, specifically 18-year old males, will be substantially smaller than is the case at present. This demographic trend will therefore result in continued pressure to recruit women in the future at an increasing rate to compensate for the overall decline in the size of the youth cohort and, more specifically, the associated decrease in the male youth cohort.

#### Decline in the Jobless Rate.

Coupled with this decline in the future youth population is a projected decrease in the jobless rate within the United States. We have already begun to see early signs of the accuracy of this projection. As a direct result of the declining birth rate in the 1960's, only about 15 million young workers will enter the work force during the 1980's. This figure compares to some 22 million youth who entered the work force during the 1970's. Simultaneously, there is projected to be an increase in the number of jobs available in the United States, so we can expect



to find a situation where it is likely that there will be more jobs available than workers to fill them.<sup>4</sup> Although this economic situation should certainly be a bright note for the overall labor market in general, the personnel needs of the military may not be well-served. The reality which faces the military is that when the economy as a whole prospers in the United States, the numbers and quality of personnel attracted to the armed forces decline in an all-volunteer environment. A slow growing labor force coupled with an increase in the number of available jobs may very well push the unemployment rate down to around four percent by 1990. This decline in the jobless rate will almost certainly make it more difficult for the military to meet its personnel needs in the future, and this difficulty in turn will place increased emphasis on expanding the number of women in the military and the jobs they will be needed to perform.

Economic Benefits Which Accrue from Recruiting Women.

In addition to the projected decrease in the youth population and the decline in the jobless rate, the military services realize that substantial economic benefits result from recruiting women into the military. Simply stated, women are easier, and therefore cheaper, to recruit than men. This is true primarily because there is not a sufficient supply of jobs in the United States for the women who desire them.<sup>5</sup> One study concerning Army recruiting costs determined that the Army spends approximately \$3,700 to recruit a quality male, while a similar quality female

costs only about \$150. This is the same cost as recruiting a lower quality male. Recruiting quality men rather than quality women into the Army would therefore add billions of dollars to the already burgeoning defense budget.<sup>6</sup> In a similar study concerning the cost analysis of enlisted attrition in the Navy, it was determined that it costs the Navy approximately \$2,000 to recruit a high quality male, while it is able to recruit a high-quality female for approximately \$875.<sup>7</sup> This, as with the study concerning Army recruiting costs, is the same cost as recruiting a lower-quality male. Additionally, it should be noted that the projected decrease in the supply of potentially available military personnel will only exacerbate this situation and increase these recruiting costs even further.

It is therefore clear that the military services derive substantial economic benefits from recruiting women as compared to men, and this reality is likely to continue to exert pressure on the armed forces to increase the number of women it seeks to attract into the military on an annual basis and retain in the military once their initial enlistments are completed.

These three pragmatic factors, separately, and certainly when taken collectively, place realistic and understandable pressure on the Department of Defense to continue to increase the presence of women in the military. As has been shown, these pressures are likely to increase in future years. These factors have led Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger to state:

Women in the military are a very important part of our total force capability. Qualified women are essential

to obtaining the numbers of quality people required to maintain the readiness of our forces. This administration desires to increase the role of women in the military, and I expect the Service Secretaries to actively support that policy.<sup>8</sup>

## CHAPTER IV

### COMBAT EXCLUSIONARY LAWS AND POLICIES

#### Existing Provisions.

If we recognize that women currently play a major role in the armed forces of the United States, and if we acknowledge that it is likely that this role will be increasing in the future, we must next directly address the issue of women in combat. After all, combat is the raison d'etre of the military, and the primary function of an armed force is to conduct **combat** operations as effectively as possible.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps at no time does the debate become more heated and emotional than when we introduce the notion that the United States may be contemplating the employment of women in combat. Somehow Americans seem to have become at least reasonably comfortable with the idea of women in the military, but we must recognize that this relative comfort is derived from notions of a peace-time military. There is a general tendency to ignore the fact that women currently serving in the peace-time military will also be expected to fulfill their military duties during a time of war. It is much more comfortable for Americans to ignore this reality.

At the present time, a combination of public law and military policy excludes women from combat. The U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps are presently restricted in their utilization of women by Title 10, U.S. Code, Section 6015 which states in part:

The Secretary of the Navy may prescribe the manner in

which women officers, women warrant officers, and enlisted members of the Regular Navy and the Regular Marine Corps shall be trained and qualified for military duty. The Secretary may prescribe the kind of military duty to which such women members may be assigned and the military authority which they can exercise. However, women may not be assigned to duty on vessels or in aircraft that are engaged in combat missions, nor may they be assigned to other than temporary duty on vessels of the Navy except hospital ships, transports, and vessels of a similar classification not expected to be assigned combat missions.<sup>2</sup>

The U.S. Air Force policy which restricts women from combat is prescribed in Title 10, U.S. Code, Section 8549 which provides:

Female members of the Air Force, except those designated under Section 8067 of this title (Medical, Dental, Chaplain, and other "Professionals"), or appointed with a view to designation under this Section, may not be assigned duty in aircraft engaged in combat missions.<sup>3</sup>

Interestingly, the U.S. Army is not, as a matter of public law, similarly restricted in its utilization of women in combat. Title 10, U.S. Code, Section 3012 provides the Secretary of the Army the statutory authority to determine the assignment policies of all soldiers. Under this authority, the Secretary of the Army issued the following Combat Exclusion Policy in 1977.

Women may not serve in Infantry, Armor, Cannon Field Artillery, Combat Engineer, or Low Altitude Air Defense Artillery units of Battalion/Squadron size or smaller.<sup>4</sup>

This policy thereby establishes a combat exclusionary policy for the U.S. Army which is consistent with the other armed services.

The fact is that the issue of women in combat has, until recently, really not been seriously debated in the United States. Why women were being excluded from combat has rarely

been stated or explored. Until recently, warfare has been so clearly recognized as "men's work" that few people really thought to ask.<sup>5</sup> Several factors suggest that no one has ever really seriously considered whether women should, in fact, serve in combat within the American military. First, if the Congress was intent on excluding women from combat, why was the U.S. Army, the most directly combat-oriented force other than, perhaps, the Marine Corps, excluded from the combat exclusionary laws of Title 10, U.S. Code? Why specifically delegate to the Secretary of the Army authority to prescribe how female soldiers could be utilized when the other service secretaries are specifically prohibited from utilizing women in combat roles? Second, there was a virtual absence of any Congressional debate on these provisions of Title 10, so the existing combat exclusionary laws were certainly not the result of any national debate or referendum on the issue of women in combat. Third, these combat exclusion laws were added to the original legislation which in 1947 allowed women to serve as part of the regular and reserve military, suggesting that the combat exclusionary provisions of the public law were not the impetus behind the legislation.<sup>6</sup> These factors suggest that no one in the United States has, until recently, given the issue of women in combat the serious attention the issue merits.

The United States is in a very unique position. For more than a century or so, we have had the luxury of fighting "our" wars outside of the United States, on some other countries' soil,

so we have come to believe that whether women should be exempted from combat is a genuine issue--one which can be debated, decided, and acted upon.<sup>7</sup> As one social scientist recently noted:

Probably we believe this because both men and women want to believe it. Women want to believe they can be guaranteed protection, and men want to believe they can provide it. But a comforting myth of this kind can be dangerous. It can debilitate and cloud judgment.<sup>8</sup>

Although this naivete' and apparent lack of interest and concern may have been understandable, even acceptable, when women accounted for less than one percent of the active force as they did when this legislation was originally passed by Congress in 1947, the time has now come for the debate to be started in earnest.

The time has come for the United States to reappraise the existing combat exclusionary laws and policies and to take a more pragmatic approach to the issue of women in combat. To debate whether or not women should be in combat is really to debate whether women should be in the military, and most observers agree that that debate is closed.<sup>9</sup> We are deluding ourselves if we continue to believe that we can somehow continue to exclude women in the military from combat. Existing combat exclusionary laws and policies serve as artificial barriers to women in the military, they are no longer realistic, and should therefore be repealed.

We can no longer expect that we can somehow continue to exclude women from combat for two essential reasons. First, the

numbers, skills, positions, and locations in which women currently serve in the U.S. armed forces dictate that women will have an integral role in future combat. Second, the type of war-fighting in which the United States is likely to find itself engaged in the future makes the notion of attempting to remove women from the combat arena impractical.

Numbers, Skills, Positions, and Locations.

When the original combat exclusionary laws were passed, women accounted for an almost inconsequential percentage of the U.S. armed forces, and they served only in traditional roles such as administration, medical, and other support positions. This is, of course, no longer the case. Women currently account for approximately 10% of the active forces, and as we have already suggested it is very likely that this percentage will increase in the future. At the present time women are serving in approximately 87 % of the skills and 59 % of the positions within the Department of Defense. They clearly have an integral role at present in the accomplishment of the overall defense mission. Additionally, women presently are performing these critical jobs, many of which require extensive training and experience before reaching proficiency, in critical locations around the world. General Bernard Rogers, at the time Army Chief of Staff and presently the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, speaking specifically for the Army but echoing the reality facing all services, stated:

Qualified women now have the opportunity to serve in all but a few specific combat units and combat special-



ties. In availing themselves of that opportunity, women, like their male counterparts, must accept the responsibility for sharing all risks and enduring all hardships inherent in their specialty. Some people believe that women soldiers will not be deployed in the event of hostilities; that they are only to be part-time soldiers--here in peace, gone in war. Some women are being used in skills other than those for which they were trained and some are being excused from performance of their duties. The Army cannot operate effectively in this manner. Women are an essential part of the force; they will deploy with their units, and they will serve in the skills in which they have been trained.<sup>10</sup>

#### Type of Future War-fighting.

The second reason it is unrealistic to think we can somehow exclude women from combat is the type of war-fighting in which the United States is likely to be engaged in the future. There is a traditional American mode of making war which seems to dominate the American perception of armed conflicts. The scenario generally begins with a dramatic act of enemy aggression. Following initial setbacks for the United States, there is a protracted build-up period during which time the immense American productive capability is marshalled and unleashed. Armies are then formed, trained, and sent, supported by American technology and production, from the United States in order to defeat the enemy.<sup>11</sup> This vision is based upon a perceived tempo of warfare which allows the United States time to prepare for the ultimate defeat of the enemy.

This traditional mode of war-fighting is unrealistic in light of current war-fighting realities. Many describe the current American military policy as one in which the United States must be prepared to fight one and a half wars. The major

war for which the military must be prepared to fight is a high intensity, high lethality war fought in response to a Soviet assault upon Western Europe. The concept of the "half war" represents a limited conflict in an area of vital strategic concern that is neither in North America or Western Europe.<sup>12</sup>

The most significant change in present day war-fighting involves the availability of time.<sup>13</sup> Time is no longer on our side. All members of the armed forces who are currently in or immediately sent to a combat arena will be expected to fight, because the results of future armed conflicts may very well be dictated by the results of the initial battles.

Additionally, perhaps the most graphic way to characterize Soviet war-fighting strategy in Western Europe would be to visualize a soccer match. Although there may at times be front lines of offense and defense, these lines will change rapidly and continually. Enemy pressure is likely to move up and down the front lines and then frequently into a myriad of deep pockets far behind the lines, much the same manner in which a soccer ball moves about the field during a match. To think that we can somehow exclude women from such a war-fighting arena is entirely inconsistent with reality. The battlefield is simply not a neat and tidy place that permits combat support and combat service support soldiers to perform only their assigned noncombatant duties.<sup>14</sup>

For these reasons the combat exclusionary laws affecting the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force should be repealed and the

combat exclusionary policy of the U.S. Army should be significantly relaxed. In so doing we will be realigning our laws and policies affecting women in combat so that they are consistent with a recognition of the integral role women currently play in the military and with the reality of the type of war-fighting in which the United States is likely to find itself in the future.

## CHAPTER V

### WOMEN IN COMBAT

To date there are no persuasive reasons to believe that women will not perform effectively in a combat environment. We will examine this assertion from the following three perspectives:

1. Review of tests and experiments concerning women in the military.
2. Analysis of attitudes against women in combat.
3. Survey of traditional arguments against women in combat.

#### Review of Tests and Experiments.

Since women have been serving in the military in increasing numbers since the early 1970's, it is fair to ask how they have been performing their military responsibilities and how the units to which they have been assigned have been functioning. The answer comes in two parts. First, from what we know up to this point, women and the units to which they have been assigned have been performing effectively. Second, although the evaluations conducted to date certainly do not point to any significant problems regarding the integration of women in the military, we must acknowledge that we really do not know that much, because sufficient testing and evaluation have not been conducted to any conclusive degree. It must be noted that the existing combat exclusionary laws and policies make some of the necessary testing and evaluation difficult, if not impossible to conduct

without violating those same provisions. As we will see, the evaluations conducted to date have therefore been concerned only with combat support and combat service support units because utilizing women in combat roles is, as we have seen, presently precluded by law.

Illustrative of the evaluations conducted to date are two studies of U.S. Army units by the U.S. Army Research Institute and one evaluation conducted by the Commanding Officer of a U.S. naval vessel. These studies are:

1. Women Content in Units Force Development Test (MAX-WAC)
2. Women Content in the Army-REFORGER 77 (REF-WAC)
3. The U.S.S. Sanctuary experiment

As will be shown, these evaluations and experiments have yielded only sparse empirical data on the effect of introducing women into traditionally male-dominated military units.

MAX-WAC. Due to the dramatic increases in the number of women in the Army, military officials began to raise questions about the maximum number of women who could be assigned to units without causing a decrease in the units' performance capability. In an attempt to find some answers to these questions, the performance of 40 combat support and combat service support companies were field tested during routine, three day field exercises in 1977. The percentage of women in these units ranged initially from zero percent to 15 % and then subsequently up to 35 %. The major findings from the MAX-WAC study were that on the average, companies that went from zero percent to 15 % women

showed a slight decrease in the average performance scores of the companies. Companies that went from 15 % to 35 % showed a slight increase in the average performance scores.<sup>1</sup> In neither case were the changes determined to be statistically significant. The research personnel interpreted the data from the MAX-WAC study as showing that female soldiers, up to the percent tested, did not lessen unit performance during intensive 72-hour field exercises.<sup>2</sup>

Two elements of interest should be noted here. First, from the way that the initial research question was posed, there appears to have been an a priori assumption that the performance of units with female soldiers would decrease at some percentage. The evaluation question was to find what that percentage would be. As we have seen though, the results of the evaluation did not support this assumption. Second, from the manner in which the percentages of female content in the units tested were determined, there appears to have been an implicit assumption that the maximum possible percentage of women in the units would be somewhere below the 50 % level. Because the highest percentage of women in the companies evaluated was 35 %, the researchers were, of course, not able to draw any conclusions concerning what might be the results of evaluations in units where the percentage of women was above 35 %. As one researcher indicated, the message from the MAX-WAC results is that if there is an upper limit to the proportion of women that a combat support or combat service support U.S. Army unit can have, it was not demonstrated by the

MAX-WAC data.<sup>3</sup>

REF-WAC. There was an interest in the Army to expand the MAX-WAC study to determine the impact of women on unit mission accomplishment during field exercises of an extended duration. The REF-WAC study was therefore designed to address this by evaluating the role of women in the 1977 annual REFORGER exercises in Germany involving one and a half weeks of realistic war games with division-sized forces. In this evaluation women comprised approximately 10 % of each group evaluated. Major results of the REF-WAC study were generally consistent with the earlier MAX-WAC study. The researchers concluded that group performance ratings showed no statistically significant difference between all-male and mixed-gender military units.<sup>4</sup> Thus again it was determined that the presence of female soldiers in military units did not lessen the performance of the units in the REFORGER exercise. The results generated by the REF-WAC study are viewed as the best available information on the performance of Army enlisted women in an extended field situation.

Sanctuary. In 1972, by direction of Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, then Chief of Naval Operations, the U.S. Navy conducted a test program designed to evaluate the assignment of a limited number of women to the ship's company of the Sanctuary, the last of the Navy's hospital ships. A total of 53 enlisted women, approximately 12.5 % of the total enlisted strength, were assigned to jobs in each of the ship's seven departments. Although this test was not a controlled experiment, after 13

months an evaluation made by the Commanding Officer of the Sanctuary reported the following major conclusions:

1. Women are capable and may serve onboard the Sanctuary under the present administrative conditions, in perpetuity.

2. Women can perform every shipboard function with equal ease, expertise, and dedication as men.<sup>5</sup>

Although these observations concerning the role of women aboard naval vessels are certainly positive, two points must be mentioned concerning the conduct of this experiment. First, key personnel aboard the Sanctuary were pre-selected according to stricter than normal screening procedures, so they may not have been representative of a cross section of the Navy. Second, although officially this was a 13 month experiment, the Sanctuary was only underway a total of approximately 42 out of a possible 400 days.<sup>6</sup>

It is quite evident that considerably more comprehensive evaluation and testing is necessary to measure the performance of women in the military. It is also important that the testing be conducted without some of the bias we have seen in previous evaluations. As these three evaluations show, it is quite difficult for any advocate of an expanded role for women in the military to argue persuasively that such an expansion would not have any effect on the national defense. The testing which has been conducted to date does not offer the kind of comprehensive, creditable evidence which is necessary to adequately defend such a position to the satisfaction of all critics. At most, we can



say at this point that we have yet to see anything which should lead us to believe that women are not performing well or the military units to which they have been assigned have diminished their ability to perform their missions. Each of the military services will need to conduct further evaluation to provide the creditable evidence which is necessary to address the concerns expressed by critics.

Recently the U.S. Army conducted a military operation which assigned an Army force of about 500 soldiers, approximately 45 of whom were women, from Fort Bragg and Fort Hood to Honduras. After about five and a half months in the field, a noted sociologist travelled to Honduras to interview the female soldiers concerning what have been described as the most extensive field conditions women have seen in peace time. Reports from this remote location indicate that the women were performing effectively.<sup>7</sup> Although not a formal experiment, this type of realistic military experience can be adequately evaluated to provide evidence which is needed concerning the issue of women in the military.

Additionally, further testing is needed to directly address the impact of gender-integration on the combat efficiency of military units. Too often in the past this central issue has been avoided, and this deficiency must be rectified by comprehensive, realistic testing and evaluation of military units.<sup>8</sup> Repeal of existing combat exclusionary laws and policies will be, of course, an essential initial step. Still, we must

acknowledge that even after additional testing is conducted, whatever the results, strongly-held attitudes and traditional arguments against women in combat will continue to be raised.

Analysis of Attitudes Against Women in Combat.

Frequently it is strongly-held attitudes rather than persuasive evidence which serves to justify excluding women from combat. Consider for a minute the following statements which serve to illustrate the attitudes held by some that women do not belong in combat. General Lewis Hershey, former Director of the Selective Service from 1941 to 1970 made the following comment regarding the role of women in the military environment.

There is no question but that women could do a lot of things in the military services. So could men in wheel chairs. But you wouldn't expect the services to want a whole company of people in wheelchairs.<sup>9</sup>

General William Westmoreland, former Vietnam Commander, acknowledging that he never would have made such a statement while on active duty, demonstrated his attitude regarding women at the military academies:

Maybe you could find one woman in 10,000 who could lead in combat, but she would be a freak, and we're not running the military academies for freaks...The pendulum has gone too far...They're asking women to do impossible things. I don't believe a woman can carry a pack, live in a foxhole, or go a week without taking a bath.<sup>10</sup>

On another occasion, General Westmoreland again expressed his attitude that women do not belong in combat when he asserted that "No man with gumption wants a woman to fight his nation's battles."<sup>11</sup>

It may be appropriate at this point to ask why individuals

hold such attitudes, even when they might not be substantiated by creditable evidence. And why are these attitudes often so strongly-held? These are difficult questions to address, but it seems there may be at least two plausible explanations. The first concerns the view that the military is a vehicle within society which allows young males to establish their masculinity. The second explanation suggests that there exists a strong desire within society to protect women from the realities of combat.

Masculinity. Military service has traditionally been viewed as a vehicle to establish masculinity, and it is seen by many as the last remaining bastion of strength and virility.<sup>12</sup> Margaret Mead, the noted anthropologist, has suggested:

It is probable...that a young male has a biologically given need to prove himself as a physical individual, and that in the past the hunt and warfare have provided the most common means of such validation.<sup>13</sup>

A woman's femininity, on the other hand, is relatively easy to achieve due in large measure to her unique capacity to bear children. For the male, however, gender identity, or masculinity, is more elusive and more difficult to establish. There is no similarly unique, gender-identifying capability possessed by males. As a possible substitute, males have traditionally made use of the role of warrior as the vehicle to establish masculinity.

Therefore, men resent the incursion of women into military roles because it destroys to some extent the single-gender uniqueness from which men derive their self-identification and feelings of masculinity.<sup>14</sup>

Some researchers have gone as far as to assert that the role of

warrior has proven to be as male-defining as child-bearing has been female-defining.<sup>15</sup>

Along a more pragmatic, albeit related approach, some critics have asserted that if females are further integrated into the military, particularly in combat roles, it may require particularly lower socioeconomic males to redefine what in their mind constitutes manhood, since military service and particularly combat have been among the most "male" of pursuits.<sup>16</sup> It may be unlikely that these soldiers, a large portion of which comprise the annual recruiting pool, can or will redefine their role as men, because to do so would challenge their entire personalities. It may be far more likely that instead these males may simply seek another "game" to play and abandon the military as the place where men go. "A young man cannot prove that he is a man by doing something that a young woman can do."<sup>17</sup>

This attitude that military service, and in particular combat, should be for males only because it is a way to establish masculinity was poignantly illustrated recently by a psychoanalyst speaking of himself concerning the fact that he had not served in Vietnam.

Like 17 million other men who came of age during Vietnam, I did not serve in the armed forces. It was a blessing, then, to have escaped; it is a burden now. I find there is something missing in me. I have unwanted feelings that nag me in unexpected ways and at expected times....In the end, Lottery No. 244 rescued me from that dilemma [whether to go to jail, become a conscientious objector, or flee the country]. But it plunged me into a state of permanent moral ambiguity, because part of our heritage insists that, if there is a war to be fought, young men are expected to fight it. War, if it exists, is a required course, and a

course with a final examination. I was, I came to feel, among those men of my generation who had never been tested.<sup>18</sup>

Protection. A second possible reason which may serve to explain the reasons behind strongly-held attitudes against women serving in the military service, particularly combat, may be that many people seem to have the desire and need to protect females from the realities of combat. Consider the following statement by Brigadier General Elizabeth Hoisington.

I have no personal experience in a combat unit, but my male colleagues tell me--and I believe--"War is hell." Heads are blown off; arms and legs are maimed; suffering is so intolerable it affects men for years. It is bad enough that our men have to endure this. But do we want young women to suffer it, too?<sup>19</sup>

Traditionally, America has tended to view its women as "everlasting children" and has attempted to protect women in much the same manner as it protects children.<sup>20</sup> Some have suggested that military tradition has idealized women as "daughters of compassion and affection."<sup>21</sup> For these and similar reasons it is difficult for men to reconcile their idealistic, although admittedly unrealistic, view of women with the horrors associated with the battlefield. Some find the concept of "killer woman" and "woman killer" to be equally repugnant.<sup>22</sup>

An idea related to this notion of protecting women is the often expressed view that if women were to be allowed in combat, the preservation of the species would be at risk. This would be true because women are seen according to this view primarily as the breeders for the next generation and as responsible for the cultural transmission to the young. Since only women are

physically capable of bearing children, then protecting women from combat is a way of ensuring the survival of the species.

It may never be possible to explain completely why individuals feel so strongly that women have no role in the military, and certainly no role in combat. Nevertheless, it is apparent that "the world has long felt that women should be protected from combat, regardless of whether or not they might be good at combat."<sup>23</sup> Although such strong feelings may have been tolerable when women played a less significant role in the military than they do today, this is no longer the case at the present time. Nevertheless, these strongly-held attitudes against women in the military, particularly combat, continue to persist.

#### Survey of Traditional Arguments Against Women in Combat.

In addition to these attitudes, there exist a number of traditional arguments which are frequently raised to suggest why women should not serve in combat. Table II lists several of these arguments.

TABLE II

#### TRADITIONAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST WOMEN IN COMBAT

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1. <u>PHYSICAL</u>	Women are not up to the physical demands of combat.
2. <u>AGGRESSIVENESS</u>	Women lack the aggressiveness required in combat.
3. <u>PREGNANCY</u>	Women may get pregnant and therefore should not serve in combat.
4. <u>STRESS</u>	Women could not handle the stress of combat.
5. <u>BONDING</u>	Women would prevent men from forming strong combat bonds.

Each of these traditional convictions can be strongly held even when buttressed with very weak or little evidence. Each argument may be supported to a degree by some element of truth, frequently derived from personal experience. When considering the notion of women in the military, particularly combat, there is an unsettling propensity to generalize across gender while there is a tendency to view men as individuals rather than as representative of all males. At any rate, the feeling that "it just isn't right" is persistent and widespread.<sup>24</sup> We will next examine each of these traditional arguments to determine whether they are substantiated by persuasive evidence or merely perpetuated by attitudes and beliefs.

Strength. Many individuals believe that women are not up to the physical demands of combat. A thorough review of the available evidence indicates that there is little question that males are, on the average, larger and stronger than females. Although a great deal of detailed research has been conducted and published on this subject, the following summary of the research adequately underscores these physical differences.

Exhaustive work has been done in defining male-female anthropometric differences. The results are clear. Men are substantially larger, heavier, stronger, and faster. Men have greater physical endurance. A larger percentage of their body weight is devoted to muscle and bone mass. They can carry heavier loads longer distances at greater speeds. They can throw heavier objects (such as hand grenades) farther and more accurately. Finally, they can do all these things under greater extremes of temperatures. It should be noted that these physical advantages are genetic--no amount of physical conditioning will change them. Start with two 140-pound eighteen-year-olds, a male and a female, in average physical condition. The male will

be stronger and faster and have more stamina. Put them into intensive physical training. At their respective physical peaks, the male will have increased his relative physical superiority over the female.<sup>25</sup>

So we see that there is really little question that, on the average, males are physically larger and stronger than females. But we must responsibly stop and ask ourselves whether this is making the same point as to assert that women are not physically up to the demands of combat? On closer scrutiny, the answer is no. This is true for three reasons.

First, although from the available evidence we can correctly conclude that American women are, on the average, smaller than American men, they are, on the average, larger than men from many other countries, such as Viet Nam and Japan to cite just two, which have fielded successful military forces for years.<sup>26</sup> Physical size is therefore not necessarily a requisite for combat ability. The relevant issue is not to compare average American men to average American women, as is so often done when referring to this traditional argument against women in combat, but whether American women are physically capable of performing the task which they are expected to perform. Each of the services has been working hard in recent years to more accurately assess the physical requirements of the various military specialties.

Second, we must be careful when comparing the physical capacities of average men to average women. There is a tendency to confuse a situation where an established difference in average physical strength between males and females becomes an absolute situation where all men are sufficiently strong for combat and no



women are physically up to the physical demands of combat.<sup>27</sup> If we acknowledge that not all men are physically capable of some strenuous combat assignments due to the average physical capacities of men, then we must similarly recognize that some females are physically capable of performing combat assignment due to the average physical capabilities of women.

Third, there is little doubt that there are some military skills, for example those of the combat infantryman, where realistically only a small number of women would be physically capable of performing the required combat skills. But we must recognize that due to the increasing technology of the modern battlefield, the number of positions requiring high levels of physical strength is likely to decrease significantly. While it is certainly highly unlikely that we will ever remove the combat infantryman from the fighting ranks of the armed forces, we must acknowledge that in the future ground combat will depend less on "bayonets and physical force--rather than on lasers, micro-processors, and other sophisticated devices that render obsolete the conventional images of battle."<sup>28</sup> Army Chief of Staff General John A. Wickham Jr. recently reported that the military is presently on the verge of major technological changes involving the emerging family of extended range and precision-guided missiles, rockets, bombs and artillery projectiles that are being developed by the services to conduct the maneuver and deep strike tactics of the AirLand Battle doctrine.<sup>29</sup> It is highly likely that the battlefield of the future will continue to be changed

substantially as these technological advances continue to diminish the physical nature of many aspects of combat.

So when carefully evaluating the first traditional argument that women are not physically up to the physical demands of combat, we find that there exists some truth to the assertion. Nevertheless, on closer scrutiny, we see that with the possible exception of such combat roles as the combat infantryman, we are making a mistake to assume, as we seem to have done, that women are not capable of the physical demands required of many combat roles.

Aggressiveness. The second traditional argument against women in combat is that women lack the aggressiveness required in combat. Consistent with the research which has been conducted concerning the relative size and strength of males and females, research concerning the relative levels of aggressiveness of the sexes indicates that males, on the average, tend to be more aggressive than females. Much debate has been raised concerning whether the differential levels of aggressiveness between males and females are due to biological differences or cultural conditioning, but most researchers would agree that differences do exist. Most of the research can be adequately summarized as follows:

1. Males are more aggressive than females in all human societies for which evidence is available.
2. The sex differences are found early in life, at a time when there is no evidence that differential socialization pressures have been brought to bear by adults to shape aggression differently in the two sexes.
3. Similar sex differences are found in man and

subhuman primates.

4. Aggression is related to levels of sex hormones, and can be changed by experimental administration of these hormones.<sup>30</sup>

Again, the question becomes whether this differential in levels of aggressiveness is a creditable reason to exclude women from combat. Once again, the answer is no. This is true for two reasons. First, as we saw with the traditional argument concerning strength, there is a tendency to focus only on the average levels of aggressiveness between males and females. Again, such a tendency excludes the extremes on either side of the mean, and this fact is even more relevant when considering the issue of aggressiveness. Researchers have determined that the distributions for aggressiveness of males and females showed large sex differences, whereas the distributions for many other traits which have been compared had very small differences.<sup>31</sup>

Second, and again similar to the strength argument, we seem to be asking the wrong question. When focusing on whether males are more aggressive than females, we obscure the really relevant question which is whether women are sufficiently aggressive to perform various combat functions. With the possible exception of the role of the combat infantryman, there is no persuasive reason to believe that women are not sufficiently aggressive to perform combat roles such as launching Howitzer artillery pieces, firing Titan missiles, or launching nuclear warheads from submarines, to cite just a few examples.

So we find after closer examination that the fact that men, on the average, tend to be more aggressive than females is not

really a persuasive reason to exclude women from combat as we have been doing. By continuing to do so we are excluding a large number of women who would certainly possess sufficient aggressiveness to perform most, if not all, combat functions.

Pregnancy. The third traditional argument frequently expressed against the idea of women in combat is that women may get pregnant and therefore should not serve in combat. The issue of pregnancy is a highly emotional topic as it pertains to the overall readiness of the military. An obvious physiological fact is that women have the capacity to become pregnant while, of course, males do not. The Pentagon estimates that approximately eight percent of women in the services are pregnant at any given time.<sup>32</sup> The Department of Defense has recently changed its management approach to pregnancy. Until 1975, pregnancy led routinely to discharge, but subsequent to that time pregnancy has been classified as a "temporary disability" and service women who become pregnant may remain on active duty while pregnant and following their pregnancy. This presents obvious management problems for the military. For example, during the 1978 simulated war game, NIFTYNUGGET, personnel managers were required to "evacuate" over a thousand pregnant soldiers from Europe at a time when the military was experiencing serious personnel shortages in the European theater of operations.<sup>33</sup> But because the fact that women may become pregnant causes management problems for the military, is this making the same assertion that women should not serve in combat? Again, I think the answer is

no. The obvious fact that women may become pregnant is certainly not sufficient reason to exclude all women from combat for three reasons.

First, probably the most apparent reason that pregnancy is not a valid reason to exclude all women from combat is the fact that the women are only pregnant for a very small proportion of their lives and some women never become pregnant. An additional factor is that people in combat positions do not spend most of their time in combat, so the incidence of pregnancy interfering with job performance is further reduced. The fact that most women can become pregnant is certainly no reason to exclude all women from serving in combat positions.

Current United States data suggests that a substantial number of young American women are choosing to postpone getting married, postpone having children, and in an increasing number of cases to have no children at all.<sup>34</sup> Some predictions indicate that the fertility rate will remain low with as many as 25 % of American women in their twenties remaining childless. This prediction is based upon the changing expectations of American females and their high degree of knowledge and control over methods of birth control.<sup>35</sup> Although it would certainly not be necessary to do so, even if women in substantial numbers decided to leave the military to raise families after their first or even second enlistment, it is not clear that this would create any more of an operational problem that would male soldiers who depart the service for whatever reasons after a similar period of

service.<sup>36</sup>

Second, although pregnancy admittedly presents some management problems, the reality of the situation is that women do not have to become pregnant if they do not desire to, and the military may be particularly well-suited to encourage such birth control techniques if it would desire to do so. Although certainly an extreme view, and one which is unlikely to be implemented for a host of moral and religious reasons, it is possible to virtually eliminate pregnancy as a consideration.

The widespread acceptance of measures to prevent and terminate pregnancies makes it possible to remove sexuality as a purely physiological deterrent. Women, as a condition of military service, could agree to use measures to prevent and terminate pregnancies during their term of service.<sup>37</sup>

The only point in mentioning such an extreme view is not to suggest it as a viable alternative to the management problems resulting from pregnancies but rather to suggest that there are methods available to control the situation should they ever become acceptable or desirable. Techniques of birth control have obviously developed to the point where women do not have to become pregnant if they do not desire to do so.<sup>38</sup>

Third, and most convincingly, although pregnancy does result in substantial time lost for women, what is frequently not mentioned is that absenteeism among men is far higher--the result of alcoholism, drug abuse, desertion, and routine medical problems.<sup>39</sup> Senator Proxmire, while responding to testimony by Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, dramatically underscores this point.

Well he should take a look at the amount of time lost by the average women in uniform compared to that of the average man, noting that the GAO had testified that men lose more time as a result of drug and alcohol abuse than women do for pregnancy and drug and alcohol abuse combined. But do you hear the Army saying that they should stop recruiting men because of their drug and booze problems? Hardly. It wouldn't make sense and neither does the argument about women.<sup>40</sup>

All this is not to suggest that the issue is not relevant to the issue of women in combat. Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, Dr. Lawrence Korb stated "the only sex-specific issue affecting military readiness is that of pregnancy; all other issues associated with combat readiness relate to both men and women."<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that women may become pregnant is certainly not a persuasive reason for prohibiting all women from serving in combat roles.

Stress. The fourth traditional against the idea of women in combat is that women could not handle the stress of combat. Although there is scant evidence to support this assertion, nevertheless the notion that women would break-down under the emotional stresses of combat is frequently mentioned as a reason to exclude women from combat roles. Noted feminist Simone de Beauvoir's research indicated that:

Instability is strikingly characteristic of woman's organization in general. Irregularities in the endocrine secretions react on the sympathetic nervous system, and nervous and muscular control is uncertain. This lack of stability and control underlies woman's emotionalism, which is bound up with circulatory fluctuations--palpitation of the heart, blushing, and so forth--and on this account women are subject to such displays of agitation, hysterical laughter, and nervous crises.<sup>42</sup>

Nevertheless, this information is hardly persuasive in light of

other relevant factors concerning the performance of women under the stresses associated with possible combat roles. From a historical perspective, a review of the performance of women serving in de facto combat roles suggests that "women, indeed would not fall apart emotionally in combat and would not show themselves to be any less fit for military action than their male counterparts."<sup>43</sup>

Additionally, although the belief that women could not handle the stress of combat is persistent, there is no evidence evidence which substantiates such a belief. To the contrary, there is considerable evidence that military women have performed on a par with their male peers in difficult circumstances and in situations of severe psychological pressure.<sup>44</sup> The recently conducted MAX-WAC and REF-WAC studies which have already been discussed demonstrate that women were fully capable of performing adequately under the stresses of realistic field scenarios. Recent studies also document the ability of policewomen in the United States to adequately cope with situations of potential danger and actual physical violence.<sup>45</sup> A noted psychologist who has done considerable work in the area of women in the military was recently asked whether there were any studies which showed that women in the military have a higher rate of emotional breakdowns or suicides. The response was, "No. None--no studies, no verifiable data."<sup>46</sup>

So although this persistent belief that women would not be able to cope with the stresses of combat seems to linger, there



is no evidence which would tend to support this belief. Since there is no evidence that women are inferior or superior to men in terms of their psychological stability to withstand the effects of combat, then there is certainly no reason to assume that they are inferior. "The conventional approach in research is to assume that no difference exists between groups until a difference is demonstrated."<sup>47</sup>

Bonding. The fifth traditional argument against women in combat, unlike the previous four, focuses less on the capabilities of women themselves and more on the effect women would have on the units to which they are assigned. This argument suggests that women would prevent men from forming strong combat bonds. Bonding is the consequence of an interdependence and resulting cohesion between members of a small group, and it is critically important because it is believed to contribute to the ability of the group to function effectively and the ability of the individual members of the group to survive the psychological burdens associated with combat. Military unit effectiveness is less a result of the application of well-applied technical skills than it is a result of sociopsychological bonding--anthropologically, male bonding--among soldiers within combat groups.<sup>48</sup>

The concept of bonding among combat soldiers is perhaps most graphically captured in the following introduction to the well-known book, A Rumor of War.

I have attempted to describe the intimacy of life in Infantry battalions, where the communion between men is as profound as between any lovers. Actually, it is more so. It does not demand for its sustenance the

reciprocity, the pledges of affection, the endless reassurances required by the love of men and women. It is, unlike marriage, a bond that cannot be broken by a work, by boredom or divorce, or by anything other than death. Two friends of mine died trying to save the corpses of their men from the battlefield. Such devotion, simple and selfless, the sentiment of belonging to each other, was the one decent thing we found in a conflict otherwise notable for its monstrosities.<sup>49</sup>

While it must be acknowledged that the importance of bonding has been questioned recently, it nevertheless remains to most observers a critical component of combat effectiveness.

Without this crucial bonding, units disintegrate under stress no matter how technically proficient or well-equipped they are. The key variable in the effectiveness of a military unit is not the technical abilities of its troops, although a certain level of technical competence is required, but the ability of troops to maintain cohesive bonding groups under fire.<sup>50</sup>

If then bonding is important to combat effectiveness, why is it assumed that women would prevent men from forming such bonds? It has been suggested that sexual attraction between men and women would destroy camaraderie and produce constant dissension among the men in the group.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, there is no persuasive evidence that such dynamics would occur and that women would prevent the formation of strong bonds within units. This is true for three reasons.

First, the results of military tests which have been conducted to evaluate the effect of women in military units present no evidence to indicate that women will prevent or diminish bonding in the units to which they are assigned. Empirical evidence to date shows that women in military units have basically no effect, positive or negative, on the readiness

of the units. The previously mentioned MAX-WAC and REF-WAC studies, although admittedly of relatively short duration, did not indicate that women adversely affected the relationships among men or among men and women. Preliminary results of the Navy's Women-in-Ships program similarly indicate a high level of performance by women and acceptance by male crew members.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, a research study involving women in physically gruelling experiments conducted by the NASA Research Center between 1977 and 1981 indicated that the women in the study bonded together into a group that was more cohesive and much more supportive than was expected by the researchers.<sup>53</sup> Although there continues to be the expectation that women will prevent men from forming bonds or that women cannot bond, there is no available evidence to support these assertions.

Second, although bonding has traditionally been a function of maleness, it is entirely possible that bonding can be more a result of commitment and dependence on a group rather than the gender of group members. Although it has for the most part historically been so, cohesion within military units need not be based on the exclusion of women. Rather cohesion can be derived from a clear definition of who is considered to be a group member and who is considered to be outside the group. Competent female service members can very definitely be respected group members and therefore as deserving of the uniqueness associated with group membership as can competent male service members. In military units, and particularly units engaged in combat,

interpersonal interdependence for survival is extremely high and likely to foster cohesion, regardless of the gender of the members of the group.<sup>54</sup> Particularly in units under stress, more critical than male bonding is the respect for each individual group member's unique contributions to the accomplishment of the mission.

Third, the thrust of most of these arguments concerning the effect of women on the formation of strong bonds is that women should not be in combat because, if they are there, men might function poorly. Although this has not been substantiated by any evidence, it would seem that the real problem is not the presence of women but rather with the men or more directly with the group leader, male or female, who would lack the ability to mold a heterogenous group of individuals into a cohesive, effective military unit. Does the problem lie with the stimulus or the response?<sup>55</sup> There seems to be little persuasive evidence to suggest that men cannot function effectively in mixed-gender military units if they are **required** to do so by their leaders. Concern that women will prevent men from functioning effectively in military units is reminiscent of previous arguments that had been used to justify excluding women from other occupations within the United States. Although clearly there are significant differences between civilian and military organizations, the integration of women into previously all-male civilian domains has not resulted in the organizational disruptions that had been anticipated.

Although bonding continues to be an important ingredient of military effectiveness and combat readiness, there is no creditable evidence to support the traditional argument that women will prevent men from forming strong combat bonds.

In the previous chapter we advocated the elimination of existing combat exclusionary laws and provisions which currently prohibit women from serving in combat roles. With the absence of combat restrictions, it therefore became important in this chapter to determine whether there existed any persuasive reasons to suggest that women will not perform effectively in a combat environment. Although certainly additional, comprehensive testing is still required, the testing which has been conducted to date gives no reason to indicate that women and the units to which they are assigned will not continue to maintain a high level of combat effectiveness. Although strongly-held attitudes against the notion of women in combat persist, a thorough review of the traditional arguments against women serving in combat has shown that no persuasive evidence exists to suggest that women will not perform effectively in combat roles when existing laws and provisions allow them to do so.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY

This paper has presented a contemporary view of women in the Armed Forces of the United States. In presenting this view, we have reached four major conclusions. First, the current presence of women in the American military is unprecedented in historical or modern times. Second, it is likely that the United States will experience increasing pressure to expand this presence in the future. Third, the existing combat exclusionary laws and policies which currently prohibit women from serving in combat roles should be repealed. Fourth, although strongly-held attitudes against women in combat persist, there exists no persuasive evidence to suggest that women will not perform effectively in combat roles.

The issues which have been addressed in this paper are critically important, for when considering the subject of women in the military we are concerned with an issue which directly affects the national security interests of the United States. A thorough review of the available evidence, nevertheless, has shown that to date there exists no creditable evidence to suggest either that women will not perform effectively in combat roles or that the units to which women are assigned will fight less effectively. The time to begin the further integration of women into combat roles is now, at a time when the United States is generally at peace in the world.

As we have seen from the earlier discussion concerning attitudes against women in combat, we would be naive not to anticipate that there will be strong opposition to the further integration of women into combat roles. But attitudes can change. It was only as recent as 1945 and 1950 when reports by two Army boards concerning blacks in the military concluded that practical considerations required a maintenance of segregation and the quota system and recommended that black personnel be assigned exclusively to combat support units rather than combat units.<sup>1</sup> Of course, there are problems when any group enters a new role for the initial time, but these problems are best addressed and resolved at a time when the United States is not engaged in a crisis military situation. Concerning the further integration of women into combat roles, the time to begin is now.

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