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BOOT CAMP OR SUMMER CAMP? RESTORING RIGOROUS STANDARDS TO BASIC TRAINING

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After touring U.S. military facilities this summer, Representative Steve Buyer (R-IN), chairman of the Subcommittee on Military Personnel of the House Committee on National Security, lamented that “Wherever we were, whether it was on the USS *John Kennedy* with the Navy or at Army training centers, there was a general complaint about the product coming out of basic training. We were left with the impression they are soft, and basic training is not tough enough. They’ve weakened the standards, and we’re concerned about it.”²

Representative Buyer’s comments and widespread reports in the press that basic training has gone “soft” should sound a tocsin for policymakers concerned with the institutional integrity of the armed forces. If left unchecked, the erosion of rigorous military standards in boot camp will undermine military discipline, morale, and readiness. Ultimately, both the fighting capability and the deterrent value of U.S. conventional forces will be weakened.

Slackened boot camp standards have highlighted the problems associated with gender-integrated basic training. With the exception of the Marine Corps, the services have embraced the dubious practice of mixing male and female recruits while simultaneously trying to transform them into disciplined warriors. Army, Navy, and Air Force efforts to “gender norm” basic training have fostered resentment and undercut respect for uniform

- 1 The author would like to thank Matt Wiitala, an intern with The Heritage Foundation’s Foreign Policy and Defense Studies program, for his help with researching this paper.
- 2 Quoted in “Rep. Buyer: Military Personnel Are Too ‘Soft,’” *Navy Times*, June 23, 1997, p. 7.

standards. In recent years, recruiting difficulties have placed additional pressure on military authorities to lower physical standards and thereby reduce attrition rates.

Women comprise nearly 14 percent of the armed forces. Recognizing that there are problems associated with gender-integrated basic training in no way disparages the valuable role women play in all branches of the armed services. In fact, it is precisely because women play such a valuable role that these problems require prompt attention.

In June 1997, Representative Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD) offered an amendment (H.R. 1559) to the 1998 defense authorization bill that would have ended gender-integrated basic training for the services. Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV) expressed interest in proposing a similar amendment. Despite gaining 125 cosponsors, however, Representative Bartlett's measure lost momentum after Representative Buyer indicated he wanted to delay the debate over integrated training for another year. Pending passage of the defense authorization bill, Congress will appoint an independent review panel to make policy and legislative recommendations. Meanwhile, Secretary of Defense William Cohen has appointed a task force, led by former senator Nancy Kassebaum (R-KS), to study the impact of gender-integrated basic training.

The Kassebaum task force report is scheduled for release in December 1997. That it will be objective, however, is open to question. Just 4 of the 11 panel members have military experience. One member, Deval Patrick, is renowned for his fierce advocacy of race-based statistical quotas. Appointed assistant attorney general for civil rights in 1994, Patrick is known to share many of the radical views held by Lani Guinier, President Bill Clinton's initial nominee for this position who failed to win Senate confirmation. For his part, Secretary Cohen seems to have made up his mind on the issue of gender-integrated basic training. At a press briefing in June, he asserted that "Based on the visits that I've paid to the various training centers, I found no compelling reason to change the current status [of integrated training]."³ After visiting the Great Lakes Naval Training Center in Illinois in September, Secretary Cohen declared, "I've found that the way in which gender-integrated training is handled here is a role model."⁴

The Kassebaum task force is unlikely to challenge Secretary Cohen's preconceived notion that gender-integrated basic training is working. This would be unfortunate, because there is ample evidence that gender-integrated basic training not only undermines rigorous standards, but also creates an environment in which recruits are vulnerable to sexual misconduct and abuse. Considering the inability of the Department of Defense to correct these pressing problems, Congress should exercise its oversight authority and consider:

- **Unequivocally reaffirming the need for rigorous standards in basic training.** A resolution spelling out the need for rigorous standards could provide senior military officers with some measure of insulation to speak more openly about controversial issues, including problems associated with gender-integrated basic training and the extent to which combat billets should be open to women.
- **Directing the services to separate male and female recruits during basic training.** Congressional action to separate the sexes during basic training will eliminate

3 William Cohen, "DOD News Briefing," June 27, 1997, p. 3.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

the potential for an Aberdeen-like scandal occurring at boot camp. At the Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, the Army recently disciplined 10 soldiers for predatory sexual misconduct, including rape and improper fraternization with female trainees. Congressional action to separate the sexes will also reduce the potential for sexual harassment of recruits by other recruits.

- **Appointing an independent blue-ribbon commission to conduct a bottom-up review of recruiting practices.** An independent blue-ribbon commission should examine how recruiting practices can be strengthened to ensure that attrition rates are not used as an excuse to lower training standards.

WHY STANDARDS MATTER IN MILITARY SERVICE

Strict military standards contribute to military discipline and fighting effectiveness. Standards measure how well small tactical units contribute to larger formations. The individual soldier, as the smallest tactical unit, must be evaluated on this basis. As the Supreme Court repeatedly has ruled, military organizations necessarily subordinate individual desires to the common good.⁵ Without such subordination, unit cohesion would be impossible. For this reason, an individual's inability or unwillingness to meet common standards is incompatible with military service.

Strict, well-defined standards also help minimize friction and reduce confusion when military units operate under conditions of extreme stress and uncertainty. To make sound and timely decisions, military commanders must know what their units are capable of achieving. In the unforgiving crucible of battle, the commander who has trained his unit to exacting standards will have an advantage over one who has not. Such an advantage may spell the difference between victory and defeat, between life and death.

Standards also facilitate coordination among the services. In 1986, Congress passed the Department of Defense Reorganization Act (popularly known as the Goldwater–Nichols Act) to clarify the chain of command and mandate that the services do a better job of working together. The development of joint standards, especially with regard to command, control, and communications systems, facilitated these improvements. The same logic applies to U.S. military coordination with defense allies and partners abroad. Without common standards, the credibility of such defensive alliances as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization would founder on the shoals of military inefficiency.

The imperative for adhering to military standards that are clear, uniform, and measurable was self-evident at one time. Sadly, this no longer is true. The Clinton Administration has shown little understanding of, or respect for, demanding standards. Instead, it prefers to view the military as an equal-opportunity federal jobs program or—even worse—as a laboratory for social experimentation.

⁵ See, for example, *Orloff v. Willoughby*, 345 U.S. 83, 94 (1953). In this case, the Supreme Court held that the “very essence” of military service involves the “subordination of the desires and interests of the individual to the needs of the service.”

THE WAR AGAINST MILITARY STANDARDS

The Clinton Administration's penchant for social experimentation has unleashed a war against military standards and values. These assaults have taken various guises. For example, the Administration has undermined effective military standards by:

- 1. Appointing civilian leaders who view the military as a laboratory for social experimentation.** President Clinton's assistant secretary of the Navy, Barbara Pope, has averred that "We are in the process of weeding out the white male as the norm. We're about changing the culture."⁶
- 2. Hiring radical consultants.** Duke University law professor Madeline Morris, who served as a special adviser to Secretary of the Army Togo West on gender integration issues, has written that Communist Party cells and Alcoholics Anonymous provide possible models for military cohesion.⁷ Her appointment to a panel conducting an Army study of sexual harassment was terminated only after the press reported her bizarre views.
- 3. Ignoring comprehensive studies urging caution with respect to the assignment of women to combat roles.** Casting aside the recommendations of the 1992 Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces, the Clinton Administration rescinded the Risk Rule that previously limited women to serving in billets in which they would not be exposed to combat hazards. Issued by the Department of Defense in 1988, the Risk Rule was formulated to help standardize the services' assignment of women to potentially hostile areas.
- 4. Pressuring senior officers to endorse gender-integrated basic training and the expansion of combat billets open to females.** With little discussion or debate, the Clinton Administration has expanded the number of combat billets open to women dramatically. At the behest of the Administration, the Army opened more than 40,000 jobs to women. In like manner, the Navy was pressured to end its restrictions on placing women aboard combat ships. Instead of engaging in a dialogue about the dangers women assigned to combat billets may face and the problems associated with gender-integrated basic training, senior officers have taken to mouthing "train-as-we-fight" platitudes.

The sustained assault on military standards has taken a severe toll. Despite the rosy picture painted by senior military officers, morale has fallen dramatically in recent years. Experienced pilots are leaving the Air Force and Navy in droves. Internet chat lines for service personnel seethe with resentment and frustration. Mid-level officers publicly express outrage that their senior leaders have remained silent on controversial issues. In an op-ed printed earlier this summer in *The Washington Times*, for example, one officer asked bluntly, "Is every careerist in uniform so concerned with his career advancement and his personal ambition that he can busy himself rearranging deck chairs on the *Titanic*?"⁸

6 Quoted in Walter McDougall, "Sex, Lies, and Infantry," *Commentary*, September 1997, p. 46.

7 Madeline Morris, "By Force of Arms: Rape, War, and Military Culture," *Duke Law Journal*, February 1996, p. 35.

8 Daniel B. Streich, "Perils of a Co-Ed Military," *The Washington Times*, June 29, 1997, p. B5. Streich is a major in the Marine Corps.

Growing numbers of service personnel believe that military standards have been compromised. In July 1997, the Army's Senior Panel Report, a study ordered in the aftermath of the Aberdeen Proving Ground scandal, found that 56 percent of the men surveyed "believed that they were expected to achieve higher standards than the women."⁹ Gender-based differences are not the only area in which standards have declined. The same Army study found that "most comments by enlisted soldiers and junior officers indicated that their leaders did not maintain fair standards."¹⁰

The erosion of standards has not happened by chance. Clinton Administration appointees have turned the discussion over the proper role of women in the military, including the merits of gender-integrated basic training, into a debate over civil rights. Advocates of gender-integrated training have forced their opponents into a defensive crouch, accusing them of wanting to "turn back the clock." Parroting this argument, senior military officers, including Army Chief of Staff Gen. Dennis Reimer, have begun to use the same metaphor.

The clock metaphor is an unfortunate use of rhetoric and faulty logic. What is appropriate for civil society is not necessarily appropriate for the military. As stated by members of the 1992 Presidential Commission, "Civil society protects individual rights, but the military, which protects civil society, must be governed by different rules."¹¹ Numerous Supreme Court decisions have affirmed the special nature of military society.¹² Military rules are designed to promote unit cohesion, not individual rights.

Advocates of putting women in combat and maintaining gender-integrated boot camp often cite the racial integration of the armed forces as precedent. This approach is fundamentally flawed. Restrictions preventing women from serving in infantry, armor, and artillery units in no way are comparable to odious discrimination based on race. Despite the fact that skin color, unlike gender, has no bearing on a unit's military potential, proponents of gender-integrated basic training and women in combat have appropriated civil rights terminology to mute concerns over their potential costs to military cohesion and readiness. Until recently, this strategy has been highly successful. But evidence of the damaging effects of slackened standards, especially in basic training, has become so overwhelming that it cannot be ignored.

THE IMPACT OF SLACKENED BASIC TRAINING STANDARDS ON THE ARMED FORCES

The Clinton Administration's frontal attack against military standards has undermined basic training. Specifically, integrated basic training has lowered standards, engendered resentment, and undermined morale. At the Great Lakes Naval Training Center, for example:

9 Secretary of the Army, *Senior Review Panel Report on Sexual Harassment*, Vol. 2, July 1997, p. 30.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 57.

11 Samuel G. Cockerham et al., *Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces*, November 1992, p. 45.

12 See *Parker v. Levy*, 417 U.S. 733, 743 (1974); *Chappell v. Wallace*, 462 U.S. 296, 300 (1983); *Schlesinger v. Councilman*, 420 U.S. 738, 757 (1975).

- **Recruits are shown a video telling them that “physically, anybody can make it through boot camp.”**¹³ The “anybody-can-make-it” mentality is harmful because it devalues the prestige associated with completing basic training.
- **Recruits no longer drill with rifles.**¹⁴ Until 1996, the Navy believed having recruits drill with weapons was an excellent way to instill discipline. Having executed an about-face, the Navy now claims that drilling with rifles is anachronistic.
- **Recruits are issued a “blue card” to deal with stress.**¹⁵ Recruits are encouraged to hand their card to a trainer if they feel discouraged.

The Navy is not alone in allowing standards to slacken. The Army, too, has developed a kinder, gentler boot camp:

- **Recruits no longer run wearing combat boots.** Studies have shown that female recruits suffer stress fractures more readily than male recruits.¹⁶ The Army’s response has been to substitute jogging apparel for combat boots.
- **Drill instructors are warned to avoid verbally stressing their recruits.**¹⁷ With this prohibition, drill instructors have been stripped of a time-tested technique for instilling discipline and inculcating mental toughness in their recruits.
- **Basic combat skills are receiving less emphasis.** According to a 1997 report by the Army Inspector General, “There is no clearly articulated or enforced standard for soldierization skills to graduate from Initial Entry Training [IET].”¹⁸

The softening of boot camp standards has not passed unnoticed. A growing number of personnel, especially among the more junior ranks, have expressed grave concerns that boot camp has become less demanding than it should be. As one Army noncommissioned officer has commented, “There’s less discipline across the board. They [recruits] come through an easier boot camp, and arrive at a duty station where their rooms aren’t inspected.”¹⁹ Expressing similar disappointment, an Army warrant officer asserted that “Basic training is too soft these days. Soldiers are reporting to advanced individual training and their next duty assignments with attitudes, no military bearing and less military knowledge than before.”²⁰

Alarming evidence of dissatisfaction with basic training also comes from another highly credible source: the recruits themselves. “I expected basic training to be tough, like the movies. This is more like summer camp,” lamented an Army recruit at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.²¹ At Fort Benning, Georgia, another recruit voiced similar concerns

13 Mark Thompson, “Boot Camp Goes Soft,” *Time*, August 4, 1997, p. 22.

14 *Ibid.*

15 *Ibid.*

16 For an example of one such study, see *Incidence of and Risk Factors for Injury and Illness Among Male and Female Army Basic Trainees*, USARIEM Report No. T19, 1988.

17 Thompson, “Boot Camp Goes Soft,” p. 22.

18 Department of the Army, Inspector General, *Special Inspection of Initial Entry Training Equal Opportunity/Sexual Harassment Policies and Procedures*, July 1997, p. 6-5.

19 Quoted in Thomas Ricks, “The Great Society in Camouflage,” *Atlantic Monthly*, December 1996, p. 38.

20 Warrant Officer Shawn M. Malinowski, quoted in “If I Were Chief of Staff,” *Army Times*, June 26, 1995, p. 13.

21 Private Jerry Brunelle, quoted in Thompson, “Boot Camp Goes Soft,” p. 20.

about boot camp: "This year I think it's getting soft, and it shouldn't. It's like these drill sergeants, and you can just tell, they are trying not to lose their rank."²²

Similar problems have surfaced with the Air Force's six-week recruit training program. In August 1997, discussing declining morale in their branch of the service, a focus group of Air Force pilots voiced a strong sentiment in favor of toughened basic training.²³ Only recently has the Air Force reintroduced the bivouac to basic training. Until last year, according to the chief of training analysis, physical training was so slack that trainees actually were being "deconditioned."²⁴ The idea to toughen the obstacle course came from recruits who felt they were not being challenged sufficiently.²⁵

The decline in boot camp standards has been brought about by several factors, chief among them the integration of female recruits into basic training. With the exception of the Marine Corps, all the services have embraced integrated basic training, a decision that has put downward pressure on physical standards. The desire to avoid the appearance of double standards has fostered gender norming, or grading on a curve. At Army basic training, for example, Individual Proficiency Tests (IPTs) measuring non-physical skills, such as map reading and first aid, have been given added weight to reduce the attrition rate of female recruits.²⁶ The Army is not alone in redefining standards. The Navy, for example, has redefined its stretcher-bearing requirement from two to four personnel to accommodate the fact that female sailors generally have less upper-body strength.²⁷

Physical differences between male and female recruits cannot be papered over in all cases, however. When Representative Buyer visited Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, he found that "women were not passing the hand grenade toss, so they changed the standards." As a result, there was "one standard for men and a lower standard for women."²⁸ The inability to throw a hand grenade effectively is not a moot question. In World War II, for example, women in the Soviet armed forces (who sometimes served in combat roles because of the high number of casualties on the Eastern Front) were killed because they lacked the upper body strength to toss hand grenades a sufficient distance.²⁹

Beyond the problems associated with double standards and gender norming, mixing male and female recruits in basic training has led to a Pandora's box of sexual tensions. Advocates of gender-integrated training are quick to point out that evidence of widespread sexual abuse at the Army's Aberdeen base did not involve basic training. These advocates conveniently ignore evidence of similar abuse at other Army training installations, such as Fort Leonard Wood and Fort Jackson, South Carolina.³⁰ Abuses have been documented at

22 Private First Class Tyler Strands, quoted in Jackie Spinner, "The New Drill Sergeant," *Washington Post Magazine*, August 24, 1997, p. 27.

23 Ernest Blazer, "Inside the Ring," *The Washington Times*, August 28, 1997, p. A5.

24 Available on the Internet at <http://www/af.mil:80/news/airman/1195/this.html>.

25 *Ibid.*

26 Elaine Donnelly, "Ready or Not: Gender Integration and the Disintegration of Good Order," *Strategic Review*, Fall 1997, p. 67.

27 Kate O'Beirne, "When Lives Are at Stake," *Ex Femina*, September 1997, p. 11. For additional information on gender differences and shipboard task performance, see D. W. Robertson and T. T. Trent, *Documentation of Muscularly Demanding Job Tasks and Validation of an Occupational Strength Test Battery (STB)*, Report No. 86-1, Naval Personnel Research and Development Center, San Diego, California, 1985.

28 Quoted in Stephanie Gutmann, "The Great Umbrella Debate," *The New York Times*, October 9, 1997, p. A39.

29 Cockerham et al., *Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces*, p. C29.

30 "Coed Training a Challenge in S.C.," *USA Today*, September 15, 1997, p. A18.

Air Force and Navy basic training installations as well. During the past three years, no fewer than eight male instructors have been disciplined at Lackland Air Force base in San Antonio, Texas.³¹

Although it has received far less public attention, trainee-on-trainee sexual harassment remains a serious problem. In a comprehensive survey, the Army's Senior Review Panel found that 42 percent of sexual harassment incidences involved trainees who had harassed other trainees.³² Another byproduct of gender-integrated training, such harassment clearly undermines the purpose of basic training.

Still another problem born of gender-integrated training involves consensual sex among trainees. For example, the Army Inspector General found that "[m]any in the chain of command at one installation believe it unrealistic to stop IET [Initial Entry Training] trainee-trainee consensual sex. The most common reason given for this was the COC [chain of command] inability to provide adequate oversight in the barracks, given the high frequency of such incidents."³³

At some installations, local commanders have interpreted gender-integrated training to mean gender-integrated living accommodations. In early 1996, one brigade commander "issued a policy letter requiring female trainees' living quarters be integrated into platoon areas with their male platoon members." Predictably, this arrangement led to problems: "Many in the chain of command cite movement of females to the male living areas as being a primary cause for trainee-trainee SH/SM [sexual harassment and sexual misconduct] incidents."³⁴

Inculcating military discipline is difficult enough without interjecting a sexual dynamic into basic training. Females are "sort of a distraction," observed one Army private, who added, "There's a lot of flirting."³⁵ In an effort to prevent sexual abuse and harassment, the Navy and Air Force issue a "Bill of Rights" to recruits as they enter basic training. Such efforts, though well-intentioned, are likely to fail. As Senator Dan Coats (R-IN) observed during congressional hearings last February, "Sexuality is one of the most basic of all human instincts.... I find it hard to believe that we can ever create an atmosphere, particularly in the military, where we do not add to this tension rather than reduce this tension, particularly if we are following a course of full integration in almost every military activity."³⁶

The Army's initial experiment with gender-integrated training lasted from 1977 to 1982. The experiment ended after it became apparent that male recruits were not being challenged sufficiently and women were suffering too many stress fractures. In 1982, a spokesman for the Army's Training and Doctrine Command said the decision to halt integrated training was made "to facilitate the Army's toughening goals and enhance the soldierization process."³⁷ A company commander experienced with gender-integrated

31 Elizabeth Gleick, "Scandal in the Military," *Time*, November 25, 1996, p. 29.

32 Secretary of the Army, *Senior Review Panel Report on Sexual Harassment*, Vol. 2, p. D15.

33 Department of the Army, Inspector General, *Special Inspection of Initial Entry Training*, p. 6-13.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 6-17.

35 Private Terrance Hilton, quoted in "Coed Training a Challenge in S.C.," p. A18.

36 *Army Sexual Harassment Incidents at Aberdeen Proving Ground and Sexual Harassment Policies within the Department of Defense*, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, 105th Cong., 1st Sess., February 4, 1997, p. 37.

37 Quoted in "Army Basic Training Ends Male-Female Units," *The New York Times*, May 4, 1982, p. A23.

training had this to say about the initial experiment: "It had to be done. It's better to try to do something, and find out it didn't work, than never to try it at all."³⁸

Apparently suffering from institutional amnesia, the Army learned little from this experience. According to a 1996 General Accounting Office report, the "Army has no records of those programs or their results to compare with those on its current program and results."³⁹ And the chief of staff of the Army, in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, has admitted that more recent studies examining gender-integrated training are inconclusive: "Some of the reports that I have seen said the performance of female soldiers improves in the gender-integrated training. Others have said no, it causes a problem."⁴⁰

Despite charges and countercharges of methodological bias in various studies, this much remains certain: The Army's return to integrated training in the 1990s was not based on any compelling evidence that the previous experiment had added to the rigor of boot camp or tangibly enhanced national security. Instead, the push to revive a failed experiment was driven by political pressures generated outside the military. This result is most regrettable, especially because there exists a reasonable alternative to gender-integrated training that has a proven track record of success.

COMBINING RIGOR WITH COMMON SENSE: THE MARINE CORPS' APPROACH TO BOOT CAMP

Unlike the other services, the Marine Corps has resisted the pressure to integrate its basic training. Male and female recruits are kept separate during all phases of boot camp. Male drill instructors are responsible for male recruits; female drill instructors are responsible for female recruits. As retired Maj. Gen. Jarvis Lynch has stressed, "Marine leaders know that the Corps must continue to successfully defend its recruit training position, for reasons as obvious as they are crucial. Anything less means the end of the Marine Corps as the nation knows it."⁴¹

The Marine Corps' commonsense decision to keep the sexes apart during basic training has concrete advantages over gender-integrated training. Specifically, it:

- **Eliminates the potential for predatory sexual abuse of female recruits by male drill instructors.**
- **Reduces the risk of misconduct among trainees.** As explained by Secretary of the Navy John H. Dalton, keeping the sexes apart "gives new and vulnerable recruits the opportunity to focus on Marine standards of behavior without the unwanted stress of gender differences they would face in a gender-integrated boot camp."⁴²
- **Provides female drill instructors as positive role models for female recruits.** "As soon as they get off the bus, we give them someone they want to be like," explained

38 Quoted in "Army Halting Joint Training of Male and Female Recruits," *The New York Times*, October 20, 1982, p. A15.

39 U.S. General Accounting Office, *National Security and International Affairs Division*, Report No. B-271797, June 10, 1996, p. 6.

40 *Army Sexual Harassment Incidents at Aberdeen Proving Ground*, p. 23.

41 Maj. Gen. J. D. Lynch (ret.), "All Volunteer Force in Crisis," *Proceedings*, September 1977, p. 33.

42 *Army Sexual Harassment Incidents at Aberdeen Proving Ground*, p. 86.

Lt. Col. Angie Salinas, commander of the female 4th Recruit Training Battalion.⁴³
As Gen. Charles Krulak, commandant of the Marine Corps, emphasized last April,

I've talked to women down at recruit training and they said in no uncertain terms we want to look up to a role model that we can identify with. We want to look up and see the battalion commander is a woman. We want to see the drill instructor that they someday want to be, to be a woman. We'll see enough guys in the next four years or 40.⁴⁴

Promoting High Standards, Not Sexual Tensions

Free from the pitfalls associated with gender-integrated training, the Marine Corps recently undertook major reforms to enhance the quality of its basic training. In October 1996, under the commandant's direction, an extra week was added to the existing 12-week program. "This is not about making things easier," according to Gen. Krulak. "This is making things tougher—physically, mentally and morally."⁴⁵ To this end, the Marines also added a grueling 54-hour exercise—called the Crucible—as a capstone to basic training. This exercise involves a series of challenging obstacles designed to foster teamwork and determination under conditions of stress, including food and sleep deprivation.

Numerous outside observers have commented favorably on the Crucible's success in enhancing the rigor of basic training. Such reforms would have been impossible if the Marines had adopted gender-integrated training. The Marines simply have recognized the obvious: Transforming civilians into disciplined military personnel is complicated enough without injecting a sexual dynamic into the equation.

Marine Private Sara Turner offers a revealing perspective on the contrast between Army and Marine basic training. First, she enlisted in the Army and went through gender-integrated training. Then, after completing her obligation to the Army, she joined the Marine Corps. In comparing the two experiences, she asserted that, during Army basic training, there was "more tension between males and females. In your free time you'll be trying to get your gear all high and tight, and sometimes you'll get unwanted attention, men wanting to talk to you."⁴⁶ At Parris Island, one of the Marine Corps' two boot camps, she found the standards higher and the situation a "lot better."⁴⁷

Despite its recent success in making boot camp more demanding, the Marine Corps knows it cannot afford to take its well-earned reputation for exacting standards for granted. As one retired general officer recalled after the Vietnam War,

[T]he Corps registered rates of courts-martial, unauthorized absences, and outright desertions unprecedented in its own history, and, in most cases, three to four times those plaguing the U.S. Army. Violence and crime at recruit depots and other installations escalated; in some cases, officers ventured out only in pairs or groups and only in daylight.⁴⁸

43 "For Marines, Separate Training Is What Works," *USA Today*, September 15, 1997, p. A18.

44 Gen. Charles Krulak, quoted in "Single-Sex Training Is Best for Men and Women," *Air Force Times*, June 9, 1997, p. 28.

45 Quoted in Mark Thompson, "Marines Still Do It Their Way," *Time*, August 4, 1997, p. 23.

46 Private Sara Turner, quoted in "For Marines, Separate Training Is What Works," p. A18.

47 *Ibid.*

The painful consequences associated with a breakdown in military order remain within the living memory of many senior-level Marines.

Today, threats to good order and discipline come not from the bitter aftermath of military defeat, but from those who would impose a politically correct agenda on the military. In the aftermath of the Kelly Flinn scandal, Representative Barney Frank (D-MA) introduced legislation that would have swept aside prohibitions against fraternization among consenting adults. The services also remain under relentless pressure to tear down the last remaining barriers that prevent women from serving in combat arms billets, regardless of the dangers to unit cohesion. Madeline Morris, the secretary of the Army's former adviser on gender issues, has argued that "It seems improbable that we will see a full transition in the gender and sexual norms in the military as long as rules remain excluding women from a range of combat positions."⁴⁹

The Marine Corps' recent success in strengthening recruit training demonstrates the value of maintaining rigorous standards rather than trying to paper over physiological differences between the sexes. The commonsense approach of keeping male and female recruits apart has complemented efforts to improve basic training for both sexes. Moreover, there is no evidence that female graduates consider themselves disadvantaged because they missed the experience of gender-integrated training.

THE RECRUITING CHALLENGE

The Marine Corps' small size has given it an advantage with respect to strengthening its basic training. Simply put, the Marine Corps can afford a higher attrition rate than the other services. In the Army, Air Force, and Navy, recruiting difficulties and the pressure to lower attrition rates have worked at cross-purposes with the incentive to maintain high standards in boot camp. Unless action is taken, these negative trends will become only worse.

Today, the military faces the daunting task of incorporating a generation of recruits steeped in moral relativism and "me-first" individualism. Many of the so-called Generation Xers believe ethical standards are contingent on circumstances or simply a matter of personal preference. Commenting on the strengths and weaknesses of recruits in the 1990s, a retired Marine Corps sergeant major observed that "recruits are smarter today—they run rings around what we were able to do, on average. Their problems are moral problems: lying, cheating, and stealing, and the very fact of being committed. We find that to get young people to dedicate themselves to a cause is difficult sometimes."⁵⁰ The Army Inspector General found that "some trainees expressed beliefs about sexual mores that are in contravention with Army policy."⁵¹

In a positive development, the services in varying degrees have begun to reemphasize core values. The Marine Corps, for example, now distributes "core value cards" to all recruits, and the Army is studying the feasibility of issuing its own "values card." But

48 Jeffrey Record, "Where Does the Corps Go...Now?" *Proceedings*, May 1995, p. 91.

49 Quoted in Eric Schmitt, "Role of Women in the Military Is Again Bringing Debate," *The New York Times*, December 29, 1996, p. A14.

50 Sgt. Maj. James Moore (ret.), quoted in Thomas Ricks, "The Widening Gap Between the Military and Society," *Atlantic Monthly*, July 1997, p. 68.

51 Department of the Army, Inspector General, *Special Inspection of Initial Entry Training*, p. 5-5.

these cards will amount to nothing but empty symbolism unless the values are explained, demonstrated, and reinforced by force of habit. Martial virtues cannot be instilled in the absence of discipline, and discipline cannot be inculcated, let alone measured, in the absence of exacting standards.

The responsibility for this crucial task lies with the drill instructor, the natural role model for every recruit. No other individual wields nearly as much power to inculcate martial values. For many recruits, especially those coming from broken homes or permissive school systems, boot camp may represent their first sustained encounter with an authority figure. The consequences of a boot camp grown soft extend far beyond the recruit depot and drill field. As noted military sociologist Charles Moskos of Northwestern University puts it, "What we're ending up with is a kinder, gentler drill sergeant who is trying to keep attrition down. And kinder, gentler drill instructors are not necessarily creating the kind of force you want to go to war."⁵²

Notwithstanding this danger, the Air Force, Navy, and Army are concerned that raising physical standards in boot camp will affect both attrition rates and recruiting efforts in an adverse manner. Even though the military has shrunk dramatically in recent years, it still requires a large annual influx of recruits. In 1997, for example, the armed services required nearly 180,000 new recruits to replenish their ranks.

Several factors, including expanded employment opportunities in the private sector, have conspired to make recruiting more difficult. In varying degrees, the services have sought to attract recruits by touting financial benefits. Recruiting Web sites, for example, trumpet enlistment bonuses and money for college. This emphasis on financial incentives will prove counterproductive for two reasons. First, although Congress always should seek appropriate pay and benefits for military personnel, the government never will be able to match salaries offered in the private sector. Second, the emphasis on financial inducements crowds out more traditional incentives to join the military, such as appeals to patriotism and sacrifice. The Army's Senior Review Panel found that "Many leaders and soldiers expressed concern that the Army is becoming more like a civilian job than a profession. Individual rights and privacy concerns, they say, are beginning to receive priority over the core values espoused by the Army."⁵³

Efforts to restore rigorous standards may raise attrition rates, at least in the short term, but this is a small price to pay considering the alternative cost of allowing slackened standards to remain in place. Military service remains a privilege, not an entitlement. Not every Generation Xer who wants to enlist is capable of serving in the armed forces, and failure to meet physical standards in no way reflects on the moral worth of an individual. Clearly, there are many ways for citizens to serve their country apart from military service.

WHY CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT IS NECESSARY

The military's inability to rectify recruiting difficulties merits prompt congressional attention. With cuts in the defense budget of 40 percent in real terms since the mid-1980s, the subsequent downsizing has placed military personnel under intense pressure. And with promotions becoming increasingly competitive, strains of careerism have surfaced.

52 Charles Moskos, quoted in Thompson, "Boot Camp Goes Soft," p. 22.

53 Secretary of the Army, *Senior Review Panel Report on Sexual Harassment*, Vol. 1, July 1997, p. 74.

Recent Army focus groups have revealed concern over what is being called a “zero-defects mentality.”⁵⁴ With rare exceptions, senior military officers have been reluctant to speak out against the relentless push by outsiders to impose a politically correct agenda on the military. These leaders bear partial responsibility for the erosion of challenging standards and the accompanying decline of the warrior spirit.

The present Administration has politicized the military to an unprecedented degree. Fearing reprisal, senior officers generally refrain from voicing opinions about controversial issues. As one commentator put it, “negative comments about integration are considered ‘career killers.’”⁵⁵ Under pressure from the White House, the Department of Defense rescinded the Risk Rule virtually without protest by senior military officers. Few active duty officers have spoken out against draconian force structure cuts. Former secretary of the Navy James Webb recently asked, “And who among the leadership has been willing to bet his reputation and his career on the need to preserve the Navy force structure?”⁵⁶

When senior officers do speak out about controversial issues, they are subject to blistering criticism. In congressional testimony last February, for example, Army Chief of Staff Gen. Dennis J. Reimer tentatively suggested that Congress reexamine sex-integrated training. He was promptly accused by Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) of wanting to return the military to the “dark ages.”⁵⁷

In the present political climate, the military forces appear incapable of taking appropriate measures to restore rigor and common sense to basic training. For example, after a recent Army survey revealed widespread sexual harassment in the ranks, the Army recommended adding a week of “human relations” classes to basic training.⁵⁸ The Army’s Senior Review Panel Report recommended that the Army “incorporate ethics and human relations training in recruiting and IET cadre courses, to include professionally facilitated sensitivity training.”⁵⁹ Such internally generated reforms will have only a marginal impact unless Congress takes corrective action.

Senior military and civilian leaders in the Army who are opposed to congressional action argue that the incidents at Aberdeen were only an “aberration.” Yet the Army Senior Review Panel found widespread sexual harassment at basic training among men and women.⁶⁰ And, as noted earlier, sexual misconduct and predatory sexual abuse by drill instructors have been found at several training installations.

According to the Army, the answer is leadership. Defining predatory sexual abuse and harassment as a “leadership deficiency,” however, begs the question of why leadership broke down in the first place. Moreover, the Army first publicized regulations against sexual harassment in 1981. The services all announced “zero tolerance” of sexual harassment in the aftermath of the Tailhook scandal. “Since then,” as the Army’s Senior Review Panel Report observes, “numerous policy memoranda by the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Army, and the Army Chief of Staff have emphasized that sexual harassment will not

54 *Ibid.*, p. 73.

55 Stephanie Gutmann, “Sex and the Soldier,” *The New Republic*, February 24, 1997, p. 19.

56 Speech by James Webb at Naval Institute Conference, U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md., April 25, 1996.

57 Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton, *Congressional Record*, February 5, 1997, p. H290.

58 Dana Priest, “Army Finds Wide Abuses of Women,” *The Washington Post*, September 12, 1997, p. A1.

59 Secretary of the Army, *Senior Review Panel Report on Sexual Harassment*, Vol. 2, p. 3.

60 *Ibid.*, p. D15.

be tolerated and that successful mission accomplishment can only be achieved in an environment of mutual respect, dignity, and fair treatment.”⁶¹ Despite such unequivocal policy statements, recruits have been abused by drill instructors and have engaged in sexual misconduct with other trainees.

Instead of fixating on “leadership” as a panacea, the military forces should consider the gender-integrated environments within which they expect their leaders to perform. As James Webb has observed, “No edict from above will ever eliminate sexual activity when men and women are thrust together at close quarters.”⁶² This fact explains not only the problems in basic training, but also the high pregnancy rates aboard Navy ships.

Gen. Reimer has testified that “We have committed ourselves to providing an environment that is free of sexual harassment and free of the conditions that would spawn sexual misconduct.”⁶³ Forcing the sexes together at basic training, however, is very much at odds with the logic of Reimer’s assertion. As Webb argues, the “sexual jealousies, courtship rituals, and favoritism that are the hallmarks of romantic relationships are inevitable when males and females are brought into close quarters in isolated, intense environments.”⁶⁴

The Army has provided no convincing reason to believe that stressing leadership and human relations training will be any more effective today than it was in the past. It certainly did nothing to prevent the abuses at Aberdeen from happening. The reluctance of senior military officers to admit that there are problems associated with the mixing of male and female recruits demands congressional action. A resolution reaffirming the need for rigorous standards in basic training, for example, could give senior officers who otherwise would remain silent a voice in the debate over gender-integrated training while forcing the Clinton Administration to correct this deeply flawed policy.

RESTORING RIGOROUS STANDARDS TO BASIC TRAINING: AN ACTION PLAN

Historically, the military has found it difficult to preserve its institutional integrity during periods between major conflicts. In the age of political correctness, this challenge has become acute. Force structure cuts, a frantic operational tempo, and relentless attempts to demilitarize the military have taken a severe toll on morale, readiness, and the military’s attempt to retain quality personnel. In addressing these negative trends, Congress should take corrective action to reverse the erosion of boot camp standards. Specifically, Congress should consider:

- **Unequivocally reaffirming the imperative for rigorous standards in basic training.** A congressional resolution should stress three related points. First, the primary purpose of basic training is to transform civilians into disciplined soldiers. As the 1992 Presidential Commission found, “The key question in preparing to win and survive is not what is best for the *individual*, but what is best for the *unit* and the military as a whole.”⁶⁵ Second, basic training is not a laboratory for social

61 Secretary of the Army, *Senior Review Panel Report on Sexual Harassment*, Vol. 1, pp. E3–E4.

62 James Webb, “The War on the Military Culture,” *The Weekly Standard*, January 20, 1997, p. 21.

63 *Army Sexual Harassment Incidents at Aberdeen Proving Ground*, p. 14.

64 Webb, “The War on the Military Culture,” p. 17.

65 Cockerham et al., *Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces*, p. 44.

experimentation. Third, basic training provides the first and best opportunity to instill recruits with a deep and abiding respect for common standards.

A congressional resolution reaffirming the need for rigorous standards would achieve several positive purposes. It would help clarify to the American people how boot camp affects the character, morale, readiness, and credibility of the U.S. armed forces. Moreover, it would help shield military officers responsible for training and educating military personnel from invasive attacks by the proponents of political correctness. As it stands now, the military finds itself speaking from a defensive crouch on a wide range of issues. The continued silence of senior officers in the face of attacks by the politically correct will engender resentment from more junior officers and enlisted personnel who believe their leaders have fallen prey to careerism.

Finally, such a resolution would help refocus the military on the importance of recapturing its warrior ethos. Earlier this summer, a comprehensive Army survey revealed that a mere one-third of female soldiers and 57 percent of male soldiers agreed with the assertion that "The main focus of the Army should be warfighting."⁶⁶ To be successful, all organizations—military or civilian, large or small, public or private—must share not only common experience, but also a strong sense of common purpose.

- **Directing the services to separate male and female recruits during basic training.** A congressional resolution tailored to the above criteria would provide a useful point of departure for policymakers seeking to protect the integrity of the armed forces. To be effective, however, it must be backed by legislation that ends the experiment in gender-integrated basic training.

Evidence of predatory sexual abuse at Aberdeen Proving Ground triggered the congressional interest in rethinking the value of gender-integrated training. In June 1997, Representative Bartlett's amendment to the 1998 defense authorization bill directed the services to keep male and female recruits apart during basic training. This amendment quickly gained 125 cosponsors before being derailed. Senator Byrd indicated strong interest in championing a similar measure in the Senate. Congress should consider reviving this approach when it reconvenes in January 1998.

- **Appointing an independent blue-ribbon commission to conduct a bottom-up review of recruiting practices.** Separating male and female recruits is a necessary step toward restoring rigor to basic training. It must be supported by concrete measures to strengthen recruiting practices; otherwise, attrition rates will place downward pressure on efforts to maintain high standards. As noted by former Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Gen. John Shalikashvili in his farewell address, the armed services are experiencing difficulties reaching their recruiting goals. Recruiting problems today extend beyond mere numbers. Efforts to imbue the military with a warfighting ethos suffer to the extent that recruits continue to consider military service "just another job," an opinion that surveys have indicated is shared by a growing number of enlistees.

66 Sena Naylor, "Values Instruction to Be Added to Basic Training," *Army Times*, August 22, 1997, p. 4.

Past studies have examined recruiting problems in a piecemeal fashion. This approach no longer will suffice. A comprehensive review of recruiting practices is long overdue. Moreover, such a study demands the objectivity of an outside panel of experts, preferably with extensive military experience. As an additional assurance of objectivity, Congress should specify that the House, Senate, and White House appoint equal numbers of members to the panel.

In assessing the recruiting practices of the current forces, a congressionally mandated panel should address three crucial questions:

1. **Why** has the number of male enlistees fallen so dramatically?
2. **What** is the proper mix of incentives to attract recruits from a broad socioeconomic spectrum?
3. **What** screening measures are necessary to increase the likelihood that recruits will make it through their first enlistment period without washing out?

If this bottom-up review uncovers funding shortfalls, Congress should act swiftly to ensure that recruiters have sufficient funds to meet their recruiting goals. Additional expenditures at the front end of the recruiting process will more than pay for themselves by raising future retention rates.

CONCLUSION

Wartime defeats invariably take their toll on a military's institutional integrity. Commenting on the breakdown of discipline during the latter stages of the Vietnam War, noted military strategist and *Los Angeles Times* syndicated columnist Harry Summers, Jr., warned that "Although most Americans were not aware of it, the military had disintegrated to the point where the security of the nation was imperiled. Racial confrontations were widespread, drugs rings had taken over entire units, indiscipline was endemic. Lying and false reports were commonplace."⁶⁷

Summers further noted that Congress played a key role in restoring the military's institutional integrity after Vietnam: "New rules from Congress enabled commanders to immediately get rid of misfits and malcontents and a 'back to basics' movement swept the military. Discipline was tightened, hands-on training emphasized, the Non-Commissioned Officers Corps was revitalized with rigorous new standards, and professionalism was stressed at all levels."⁶⁸ The resulting back-to-basics focus on warfighting prompted doctrinal reforms and boosted morale. Collectively, these improvements provided the United States with the ground forces capable of evicting Iraq's army from Kuwait in 1991.

Even though the problems facing the military today are of a different nature, they are no less serious. Cumulatively, the lack of strategic direction from the White House, a frenetic operational tempo, and invasive attacks from the politically correct have undercut the morale of the armed forces. If left unchecked, the slide toward even softer standards in basic training will have a corrosive impact on the military as a whole.

Basic training should provide a foundational experience for recruits. This common tie assumes special importance when one considers the wide range of occupational

67 Harry Summers, Jr., "An Officer and a Gentleman," *Washington Monthly*, September 1997, p. 9.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

specialties within the armed forces. The Army alone has 240 different occupational specialties. Unless recruits attend the same school or receive an assignment to the same unit after boot camp, basic training provides the only common bond they share with other members of their service. For this reason, basic training plays a crucial role in shaping the values of each of the country's armed services.

Recruits in basic training today will provide the enlisted leadership of the armed forces for the next two decades. Congress must act now to ensure that their training standards are demanding, measurable, and uniform. As one Army private put it, "If basic training was tougher, we'd end up with better soldiers."⁶⁹ Congress also must do its part to ensure that Aberdeen-type abuses never happen in basic training.

Failure to protect the integrity of the armed forces will undermine the effectiveness of U.S. conventional forces. As Representative Bartlett warns, "Dead and maimed airmen, soldiers and sailors, grieving families and a weakened military is the price that our nation pays when leaders make political correctness a priority over national security."⁷⁰

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69 Private Tony Steinhart, quoted in Thompson, "Boot Camp Goes Soft," p. 23.

70 Representative Roscoe Bartlett, "Single-Sex Training Is Best for Men and Women," *Air Force Times*, June 9, 1997, p. 28.

