

Interim CMR Special Report – October, 2014

US Marine Corps Research Findings: Where is the Case for Co-Ed Ground Combat?

Abstract

This is an Interim Special Report on the multi-phased research effort, initiated by **Marine Corps Commandant General James Amos** to gather quantitative data identifying the physical strength requirements of combat arms units. The goal is to find ways that women can be integrated into the combat arms without lowering standards. Researchers are finding this difficult (actually, impossible) to do, owing to naturally-occurring physical differences that make men significantly stronger. Androgenic hormones that are not going to change account for greater muscle power and aerobic capacity for endurance.

USMC Training & Education Command (TECOM) has used research methodology involving convoluted statistical formulas to "correlate" basic **Physical** and **Combat Fitness Tests (PFT and CFT)** with "proxy tests" simulating combat. TECOM also has produced abundant data indicating that gender-related disparities are most obvious and consequential in tests of upper-body strength. Upper body strength and endurance are essential for survival and mission success in direct ground combat. Significant percentages of female volunteers were unable to perform several proxy tests simulating upper body strength requirements in direct ground combat units that attack the enemy with deliberate offensive action.

An analysis of the TECOM data prepared by associated researchers recommends minimum scores for entry-level qualification purposes, determined by average performances of the weakest performers in combat proxy tests. Lower-but-equal standards would elevate risks for all concerned, leaving men less prepared for close combat and women exposed to resentment they don't deserve.

At the present time, training standards at the Marines' **Infantry Officer Course (IOC)** remain high. To date, twenty female officers attempted the extremely tough course but were not successful. It is not clear, however, where announced plans to achieve "**gender neutral standards**" will or will not use "**gender-normed scores**" to account for physiological differences. Administration-endorsed mandates for "**gender diversity metrics**," (read, "quotas") could result in standards that are made equal but lower than before.

Nothing produced by the research so far indicates that women can be physical equals and interchangeable with men in the infantry. Nor is there any evidence that women want to be treated like men in the combat arms. Ongoing research programs are producing significant data, but the methodology and choice of outside advisors effectively precludes careful consideration of many unresolved issues. There is a great need for more transparency, independent analysis, and diligent congressional oversight to defend the interests of women, men, and the armed forces as a whole.

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