



Center for Military Readiness



Promoting high standards and sound priorities for our military men and women.

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## **PENTAGON MISPLACES PRIORITIES ON WOMEN IN LAND COMBAT**

*The following comments may be attributed to **Elaine Donnelly**, President of the **Center for Military Readiness**, who served as a member of the 1992 Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces:*

"The Pentagon has announced a new policy regarding the assignment of women in land combat that does the wrong things for the wrong reasons. Instead of putting the needs of the military first, the Pentagon is taking incremental steps to implement the deeply-flawed recommendations of the [Military Leadership Diversity Commission](#).

"The MLDC, largely composed of equal opportunity experts, has recommended policy changes that would treat the military like just another civilian 'equal opportunity' employer. To advance 'diversity metrics' for female personnel, the commission has recommended policies that weaken or eliminate women's exemptions from assignments in or near direct ground combat battalions. These include 'tip of the spear' Army and Marine infantry battalions and Special Operations Forces.

"Americans are proud of women in the military, and there have been some changes in their roles since 9/11 that deserve recognition. For example, female engagement teams (FET)s and cultural support troops interact with civilian women and children in war zones in ways that are difficult for male personnel. It is dangerous duty 'in harm's way,' but still not the same as direct ground combat, which involves deliberate offensive action against enemy forces under fire. Direct ground combat missions, with physical demands beyond the capability of almost all women, have not changed.

"If a soldier is wounded in battle--what we saw many times in Baghdad in 2003 or Fallujah in November 2004--a collocated support soldier may be the only person in a position to evacuate the wounded soldier on his own back. In this environment, women do not have an equal opportunity to survive, or to help fellow soldiers survive. Lives should not be put at

needless risk just to satisfy 'diversity metrics' for the career ambitions of a few.

"It is not realistic to expect that women will be held to the same physical standards as men. Attempts to establish such standards always are attacked by feminists as 'unfair' and 'barriers to women's careers.' The result is lowered, gender-normed standards that mandate inequality in the name of 'equality'."

"By formally eliminating rules affecting units collocated with infantry battalions, the Defense Department is imposing needless complications and burdens on direct ground combat units. The Pentagon also is inviting another ACLU lawsuit challenging young women's exemption from Selective Service registration, which the courts have upheld as constitutional because women are not assigned to direct ground combat.

"For this reason, the incremental policy changes announced today will have harmful consequences not only for our brave women and men in the military, but for unsuspecting civilian women as well."

To schedule an interview on this subject, please send a request to **elaine@cmrlink.org**.

*Elaine Donnelly, President of the Center for Military Readiness, served as a member of the 1992 Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces.*

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