

■ Letters to the Editor

Women in Combat

I am tired of hearing about how women can or cannot handle stress in combat. I have not deployed for combat in my 19 years of service. But I feel that my feelings would be the same as men's: scared. The males won't say it, but they are scared.

As for stress, women soldiers are under more stress daily than are male soldiers. Women have to prove themselves at every new assignment. The male soldier of the same rank can walk into any job and be accepted and respected.

Females will not be accepted in the military or in management positions in our society, or allowed in combat, until males accept women as authority figures. The views of society need to change. Men refuse to accept females as leaders or as peers in higher ranks. And subordinates will not accept or acknowledge orders from females.

Our leaders need to educate and give females the support that is needed to accomplish the mission. The female, like the male soldier, should be able to select what job she wants. If a female desires to drive a tank or to be in the infantry, she should be allowed to do so. These MOSes should be open strictly on a volunteer basis. There should be no female placed in a combat arms MOS who does not desire to be in that MOS.

Our leaders need to support the female soldier when orders are issued and the male ignores those orders. The comment under-the-breath may be that "she is only a female," and the male officer or senior NCO laughs. This is wrong, yet it happens. Women will not survive in combat until males learn to accept them in the Army. Also, other females must learn to work for females and learn to do their jobs, rather than intimidate males to get their way.

And to all you women out there using males to your advantage on the job — *shame on you!*

MSG Judith A. Alves
Fort Bliss, Texas

Hampered Career?

During my 12 years in the Army, I've continuously heard how horribly hampered my career has been — and will be — because I am excluded from combat. Your winter article on women in combat said that

"female NCOs do not seem to share women officers' beliefs that their own careers have been hampered by the exclusions." Just who are these women officers? That's a bunch of hogwash!

I've had the opportunity to be a platoon leader, company commander and battalion staff officer. These are the "plum" assignments for any officer. My career has been just great. I, and many other women officers, totally support the comments voiced by CSM Myles and SGM Lofton. We are professionals. We knew full well what we were getting into when we joined the Army. And, like the sergeants major, we feel standards should not change just to accommodate women.

If the Army's leadership decides to open combat positions to women, so be it. If not, and some women feel they're being treated unfairly, the voluntary separation incentive is still available.

CPT Susan M. Oliver
Fort Harrison, Ind.

Oliver is in the military police branch.

Prior Service NCOES

It is becoming all too common that soldiers with prior service are not receiving credit for courses that are equivalent to NCOES courses, especially if soldiers served in other service branches.

NCOs should ask their newly assigned soldiers what prior service training they received and then help these soldiers to get that training certified and in their official records. A former airman who completed the Air Force NCO Preparatory Course, for example, can get credit — including promotion points — for PLDC.

NCOs can help their soldiers with the equivalency determination by sending training certificates for PLDC, BNCOC and ANCOC to:

(For PLDC:) HQ, TRADOC
ATTN: ATTG-ILN
Fort Monroe, VA 23651-5000

(For BNCOC and ANCOC:)
Commander, MILPERCEN
ATTN: DAPC-EPT-FN
200 Stovall St.
Alexandria, VA 22331-0400.

The determination for PLDC equivalency only takes about one week, in part because it is not MOS-specific. BNCOC

and ANCOC determinations take about four weeks, because proponents must determine if the related courses meet MOS standards.

Helping your soldiers earn equivalency certification will help them get promoted sooner. It will also save the money that would have been spent to send them to NCOES courses and will keep them on the job instead of being TDY for several weeks.

MSG Forrest B. Watkins
Fort Monroe, Va.

Watkins is the senior staff and training NCO for TRADOC's NCOES Branch.

Training Replacements

A concerted effort to enhance NCO leader development has been under way in my unit for more than a year. Under the guidance of the CSM, we have concentrated on applying the concept of "training your replacement."

We are committed to developing quality future leaders. Here's what we're doing:

All NCOs are given the opportunity to excel. Sergeants of all ranks are carefully guided into increased duties and responsibilities under the supervision of the unit's sergeants major and first sergeants.

Management tasks are assigned to all NCOs, including tasks normally performed by officers and senior NCOs. They are given the authority and are allowed the flexibility to create and develop programs. Senior NCOs serve as assistants, coaches and mentors throughout each task.

The command also emphasizes NCO assignments, to include rotating positions, challenging NCOs by placing them in leadership positions and recommending future assignments.

The result is that we are watching our NCOs blossom right before our eyes.

SGM Mark Pistillo
Orlando, Fla.

Pistillo is assigned to the 143rd TRANSCOM, 81st ARCOM.

School vs. Time

Time is one major obstacle NCOs face when we attempt to continue our civilian education. How can we take care of unit responsibilities, FTXs and TDYs and go to school? There are solutions.

First, learn about available education opportunities on post and off post. Ask questions. What is the minimum number of students required for a class? Would the school consider making arrangements for class sites and hours to accommodate a group? Do you know other soldiers or civilians who would like to take a certain course? How much advance notice would the school need to allow you time to find students to sign up for a certain course? Make proposals and work with schools to reach agreement.

The key to a non-traditional schedule is that it offers flexibility. Instructors can work around FTXs and such. Here are some examples: a four-hour class one night a week for 12 weeks, a weekend class that meets once a month on Friday night or all day Saturday for three months, a condensed class (taken while you're on leave) that meets every day for a week from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

You aren't asking a school to alter its standards, just the traditional times and on-campus sites. You're only limited by your imagination and your desire to continue your civilian education in coming up with solutions to the time obstacle.

SFC Hal G. Sensing
Smyrna, Tenn.

Top Brass & Insignia

Could the Journal publish photographs of all the top Army brass, like those of the chief of staff and the sergeant major of the Army that were in the summer issue?

Or, could you dedicate a pull-out section each year to publish the entire chain of command's photographs?

Either option would be a valuable service to units.

I would also ask that you publish a color chart of all active duty units' insignia. With deactivations, it would be great to know which units are still active.

SSG Jeffrey Stokes
Fort Ord, Calif.

We hope the timely photographs of the CSA and SMA were useful. And we'll consider your other ideas for future "mini posters." Note, however, that providing chain of command photographs — especially local VIPs — is the responsibility of your local photo facility.

Dismissed vs. Fall Out

When do you say "dismissed" or "fall out" to a formation, regardless of the formation size?

Name Withheld
Front Royal, Va.

FM 22-5 states that "fall out" implies that a formation is being temporarily excused in order to stand by or regroup later. "Dismissed" has a more finite ring because it dismisses soldiers for the day or until the next scheduled formation. Often, however, a company will order "platoon leaders/sergeants, take charge of your platoons," leaving smaller elements to dismiss their soldiers.

Marketable Skills?

Career NCOs are haunted by the question, "What will I do when my military career is over?"

The fact is that the officer corps is the management branch of the Army and enlisted soldiers are the blue-collar workforce. The officer's career is professionally managed. Officers are sent back to school at mid-career to obtain advanced degrees, on top of their college degrees. They have progressive assignments that convert to civilian management skills.

The average enlisted soldier has a high school education. We attend professional development schools, but most of our careers are spent hands-on in TOE assignments and gaining skills that are rarely marketable in the civilian sector. Very few NCOs earn advanced degrees and obtain management skills.

If we are to have a smaller and more refined Army, the Congress must enact legislation that would guarantee an optional college education for career NCOs. We must break the blue-collar syndrome and ensure that NCOs retire with competitive, marketable skills.

SFC Larry C. Bostick
Fort Dix, N.J.

Gay '90s?

Reference the enclosed article (*Air Force Times*, Dec. 23) that says four presidential candidates favor allowing homosexuals in the military, I adamantly oppose this and I support the official DOD position

that the homosexual lifestyle is prejudicial to good order and proper discipline.

Homosexuals need medical, psychological or spiritual help and, for their own well being, they should seek help immediately. Theirs is not a civil rights issue, as some people portray it.

SFC Jack H. Burke Jr.
Wytheville, Va.

Plato vs. Comic Books

Happened to come upon the Journal while pulling a weekend of staff duty officer. My thoughts went back to another day's duty in 1968 at Bang Pla, near Bangkok, when I was a runner — a draftee with eight months in the Army.

SSG Smith, my SDNCO, worked in the crypto repair section. I remember that he seemed older than most staff sergeants were during those quick-promotion years. I pegged him as a loser.

We both came prepared with reading material. Neither of us was reading Plato's *Republic*, but three years as an English major had helped me to recognize, if nothing else, the difference between comic books and literature. Smith was *not* reading comic books.

I'm not sure just how I phrased it without getting a punch in the nose, but I said something like this: "Why are you reading that stuff? How can a career soldier possibly enjoy books like that? What are you doing in the Army?"

My nose is still straight, so I must have used more tact than that. I hope so, because Smith's reply showed his class:

"I like the Army. My MOS doesn't have fast promotions, but I like the work. My MOS keeps me challenged. I'm not getting rich, but the Army pays me enough to support my family. We enjoy traveling around the world and the Army lets us do that. I like what I'm doing, and I don't have any regrets about having made the Army my career."

For once, I said the right thing: nothing.

Smith didn't know it, but his few words changed at least one person's outlook forever — not just about NCOs, but about stereotypes and generalities, too.

CW3 Steve N. Kohn
Fort Hood, Texas

Kohn is a former SFC.