



Written by [Bonnie Gillis](#) on January 28, 2016

## Women at War

*This article originally appeared in the March 16, 1987 issue of The New American and is republished here because of the Pentagon's announcement last month that all combat roles will be open to women. The author, Brigadier General Andrew J. Gatsis, U.S. Army (Ret.), who passed away in 2010, entered the U.S. Army in 1939 as a private and earned his commission upon graduating from West Point. During his 36 years as a professional combat infantryman, he became one of the most decorated officers ever to serve in our nation's armed forces. In retirement, he served on the National Council of The John Birch Society.*



There is an attempt to vote the unqualified into the company of the qualified in all segments of American society today. This inequity is particularly noticeable in the Armed Forces, where the government makes a special effort to promote a large influx of women into roles for which they are unsuited.

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Although this effort is funneled through the Women's Movement, it emanates from and is controlled by a power-seeking group whose objective is to reduce the combat effectiveness of our military establishment and create a unisex society. Both of these objectives dovetail with the goals of Communism and World Government. Reduction of combat effectiveness would remove America's final protective barrier against a Soviet military threat and subject her to blackmail (better known as coercive diplomacy). The creation of a unisex society would make all citizens legally alike and relegate them to the same level, which is a prime factor needed to promote and sustain control over the citizens of a totalitarian regime.

### **Feminists Disarming**

The Women's Movement is the militant arm of a plan to place the family at the disposal of the state. From its very inception, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) has remained the prime goal of the feminists, despite its repeated defeat. However, the feminists have always had an ongoing parallel plan — to force legal equality on society through the back door, through statute-by-statute enactment. No better environment exists to advance this plan than our Armed Forces, since the military is socialistic in nature. To accomplish their objective, they use the All Volunteer Forces (AVF) as an example to mislead Americans into believing that war and combat roles are natural to women.

The structure through which they work is the top command and control center of our military forces, the Pentagon, which is saturated with feminists. Over the past decade, members of various women's organizations, such as NOW, have been placed in key positions of authority, where they formulate



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policies concerning the U.S. military readiness posture. The result is that the demands of the women's movement have eclipsed national security considerations.

The pace of sex integration accelerated during the Carter years. President Carter himself advocated registration of women for the draft, and his appointees pushed hard for repeal of the combat exclusion. Mr. Carter and many of our senators said women would not be put in combat if drafted; yet, on November 16, 1979, I testified in Congress before the House Armed Services Subcommittee for Military Personnel against President Carter's proposal to do just that through a Department of Defense proposal. Even with full presidential backing, Congress turned down the recommendation that women be registered, and the Supreme Court upheld their vote.

Nothing really changed with the incoming new administration. His anti-ERA rhetoric notwithstanding, President Reagan has promoted the goals of this amendment and supported it indirectly by such actions as his nomination of ERA supporter Sandra O'Connor as Supreme Court Justice. As a member of the government-sponsored civilian feminist organization, Defense Advisory Commission on Women in the Service (DACOWITS), Judge O'Connor initiated and was the principal sponsor of the effort to repeal the laws that exempt women from military combat. DACOWITS is a group of 31 civilian feminists appointed by the Secretary of Defense to advise him on *how to use women in the military*. They work quietly behind the scenes, pushing for direct combat roles for women.

Reagan's appointment of Caspar Weinberger, a strong supporter of the women's movement, as Secretary of Defense, has done nothing to suspend the high female strength goals of the Carter Administration as the military services requested him to do. In fact, shortly after the request, in a speech on defense made before the American Stock Exchange on June 22, 1982, Weinberger stated, "We hope to use more women in military jobs in the future." The former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Equal Opportunity, Kathleen Carpenter, one of the most avid women liberationists in the Carter-controlled Pentagon, was replaced in the Reagan Administration by Dr. Sharon Lord. Lord, a strong feminist and former president of NOW in Tennessee, continued to advance Carpenter's policies and, after only three months in office, recommended that women be placed in *direct combat roles*.

At the same time that our Defense Secretary speaks of building a strong defense, he dismantles it by promoting feminist causes to the detriment of combat efficiency. He strongly supports the creation of career opportunities that allow women to be placed in combat support positions that would involve them in the fighting if hostilities were to break out. In a recent interview on NBC's *Nightly News*, Weinberger contended, "The value of having women in those positions [within the combat zone], the value of leaving *all career avenues open*, is *greater* than the problems of dealing with the *comparable disruptive effect* [on combat operations]."

In February 1982, Deputy Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci (the newly assigned NSC advisor to President Reagan) sent a memorandum to the Service Secretaries with the following demand: "... I want you to identify *specifically* the military career paths, officer and enlisted, which are closed or in any way restricted to women by combat limitations you have in place." Any military commander would immediately recognize this type of language as a directive to *eliminate combat barriers against women* or otherwise be identified as uncooperative and inefficient. If women can be equalized with men in the environment most alien to womanhood, goes the thinking of Carlucci and his ilk, no better example could be used to convince society that women can do anything that men can do and that there is little difference between the sexes.

The rejection by the Congress and the Supreme Court of registration of women for conscription does



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not by any means end the effort of the women liberationists to attain their objective. The attempt to ratify the ERA in the state of Vermont on November 4, 1986 is evidence of their determination. Given the accommodations of the United States Congress in recent times, it is almost a miracle that the drafting of women has not been implemented by now. Only the massive opposition of the people has prevented it, and only the massive opposition of the people can continue to prevent it.

Don't be deceived: The registration of women is always just around the corner. With the Democrats once again in control of Congress, the reinstatement of the draft to repair the Democratic Party's weak defense image is already being discussed. You can be assured that the Pentagon plans to make women an integral part of such a reinstatement.

As an example, there is a proposed Department of Defense plan on the back burner, the Health Personnel Mobilization Act, calling for the registration of male and female physicians, nurses, and other medical professionals in case of an emergency. It is justified on the basis of severe shortages in Reserve physicians and nurse manning. Selective Service has already developed standby regulations and procedures to implement this plan. This is the camel's nose in the tent for drafting women in all military categories. The same excuse (i.e., shortages of qualified military-aged males) was used during the Carter Administration to convince Congress that women should be drafted.

The facts of the matter are that there is no shortage of qualified military-aged males. Even if there were, a number of alternative measures could solve the problem:

- raising the ages of qualified males several years (some of my best soldiers in the Korean War were in their mid-20s and early 30s);
- lowering educational and medical requirements (it does not take a high-school graduate to dig a foxhole, and a soldier with flat feet can certainly drive a tank);
- using increasing numbers of aliens (they would fight as hard as the ordinary American soldier because they would appreciate the newly achieved U.S. citizenship that would be given to them for serving in the Armed Forces); and
- recalling physically fit retirees. The Pentagon uses all of the above measures today when they cannot get enough volunteers.

There are women — certainly a minority — who like the military and have given an excellent performance in many non-combat positions within the medical corps, communications or supply as officers or enlisted personnel. During World War II, women played a major role in such non-combat positions, and they proved their worth to the overall war effort. However, these positions do not satisfy the objective of the women's liberation movement, which is to make women equal with men in all sectors of military activity, regardless of the damaging effect it has on esprit de corps and combat efficiency. Absolute sexual equality in the Armed Forces would require women soldiers to perform tasks prohibited to them in many of the military occupational specialties (jobs) to which they are presently assigned.

Two reorganizational changes have brought absolute equality much closer to reality: (1) The sexual integration of the services; and (2) The assignment of women to roles formerly reserved for male soldiers, such as line pole climber. Prohibitions against the placement of women in *close combat units* (fighting elements) do not apply to *combat support elements* (those with a primary function of supporting the fighting units logistically). Women today are fully integrated and collocated with men in these support organizations, *which are positioned in the combat zone* and, in many cases, *will be*



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*required to fight.*

There is no such thing as separating combat from non-combat in the combat support units. Truck drivers in combat support units carrying supplies to the fighting elements must run the roads. Many will be ambushed by enemy breakthrough patrols. Supply points in the rear will be attacked by rockets, helicopters, artillery, infiltrators, and airborne forces. Women in these units will have to fight and will be burned, disfigured, mutilated, and sent home in body bags. Yet Army Secretary John O'Marsh, in an internal memo dated November 26, 1986, approved the opening of *all* forward combat support battalions to women, increasing the number of combat support jobs for them by 10,000.

This is alarming enough, but even worse is that many women in these combat support organizations *will be brought into the fighting elements* in order to replace quickly the casualties of those units that have been decimated or nearly destroyed. In such situations, replacements are needed immediately and the closest place to get them is from the combat support units in the vicinity. Tapping the support units for replacements is a common occurrence in combat, for the replacement pipeline is slow and so complex it never flows evenly or provides the replacements needed soon enough in an emergency. Anyone with real combat experience knows this. Normandy, the Battle of the Bulge, and the Chosen Reservoir provide excellent examples of the practice of drawing fillers from combat support units to replace casualties in depleted combat elements. All of this talk about women not being subject to combat if drafted, because of legal prohibitions, is totally false. There is no way for them to avoid it under our current structure.

### **Mother Nature's Limitations**

If women are put in combat, our combat efficiency will be reduced. All kinds of tests have been conducted, showing conclusively that women are not suited for combat and that they are by nature smaller, slower, less combative, and less aggressive than men; and that they are not sustainable in the field for long periods of time due to personal hygiene problems. Medical tests have shown that women cannot stand the extreme temperatures of heat and cold as well as men, due to cardio-respiratory differences. Because of their builds, men are stronger than women and run faster and jump higher than women, who have a shorter center of balance, wider hips and shorter legs. The Walter Reed Army Institute of Research concluded, after two years of study, that women soldiers in the field suffer a great deal more from stress than men. The small frame of a woman makes the 30-inch marching step difficult and wears her down faster than her male counterpart. Most important, the average woman has only 55 percent of the upper body physical strength of a man and an endurance capacity of only 67 percent as compared to the man. It takes upper body strength to dig a foxhole quickly in hard ground; hack a path through the thick jungle all day with a machete; fight an enemy soldier with a rifle butt and a bayonet; cut, lift, and carry heavy logs for constructing defensive bunkers; or pull a man out of a crashed, burning helicopter.

Even in the non-combat, non-traditional roles of the combat support units, women find that they cannot do many of the tasks required, or that they accomplish them at a slower rate than men. This obviously results in less work and reduced operational efficiency. I have personally seen female soldiers unable to lift heavy equipment such as ammunition, mechanics' tool sets, filled sandbags, food crates, or large camouflage nets. They could not move field range stoves, teletype machines, heavy generators, or big field desks. During field exercises, they had great trouble changing heavy truck tires, hitching trailers to the trucks, and carrying people on medical litters. They could not brake, steer, and drive trucks in rough terrain; put up cumbersome antennas; erect large bulky tents; construct ammunition bunkers,



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dig adequate latrines; or lift tackle off recovery vehicles. These tasks are only a sample of what is required in the combat support category, not to mention the difficult military skills needed for women to defend themselves.

These same general principles apply to all military services. In the Navy, for example, it is well established that the shipboard role for women must be limited. As one Navy petty officer explains: “Everything on ship is designed for men. Until you redesign the heavy equipment in the Navy at all levels [which is impossible], it is just no place for women.” Paint, for example, is carried in five-gallon cans that weigh up to 95 pounds, food on ship is in heavy crates that women cannot lift, and high pressure firefighting hoses and refueling lines in the navy inventory have proved nearly impossible for women to handle properly. At Norfolk, the steel cables used to demagnetize the hulls of ships weigh four pounds per foot and extend up to 500 feet. Furthermore, when the ship is sinking or damaged from enemy fire and all is in pandemonium, everyone must be capable of giving meaningful manual physical assistance in emergency actions, such as launching heavy life boats. The last thing needed at this time is on-lookers and part-time help getting in the way.

### **Missing from Action**

In addition to reducing combat efficiency, the drafting of women will also diminish combat readiness. Today, units are having their readiness for deployment overseas eroded by pregnancies. The annual average for female soldier pregnancies in the Army runs 15 percent, and an additional six percent are estimated non-deployable because of sole parenthood and other reasons. At any given time throughout the year, 10 percent of Army women are pregnant. This means that for pregnancies alone, 6,900 of the 69,000 women in today’s Army cannot be deployed overseas, and in the event of mobilization, those who are pregnant overseas would have to be shipped home, along with dependents. Since the women’s libbers in the Defense Department will not allow the Army to discharge pregnant soldiers, a continuous average void of 20 percent is built into the women’s contingent of our readiness posture, with inadequate provisions for filling it in an emergency.

This policy toward pregnancy is also having a disruptive effect on the continuity of unit and individual training. Service women in the mid-to-advanced stages of pregnancy are exempt from nuclear, biological, and chemical training and cannot accomplish weapon qualification for one obvious reason – they can’t shoot lying in the prone position on the ground. They must often be excused from Unit Field Training because of morning sickness, need for special diets, necessity to wear maternity clothes, and the likelihood of increasing accident exposure for both parent and unborn child. The average duty time lost by a pregnant soldier is 105 days a year, causing loss of productivity for the entire unit.

Imagine the adverse impact of an annual 20 percent non-deployable rate on the combat readiness of a contingent of four-million *unmotivated* drafted women. That could amount to 800,000 non-deployable people.

### **Mixed Company**

Into what kind of environment will our drafted women be pushed in peace-time? One where the talk is rough, and the use of vulgar phrases and obscene gestures are daily occurrences. Where rumors are maliciously spread about women’s reputations, leading to harassment and propositioning. Where drug market conditions, drug busts, and sex provide ready topics of conversation. The thoughts of soldiers coming back to the barracks at night — roaring drunk or doped up — can easily turn to womanizing. Some soldiers become crude, harassing, unruly, and destructive. They may punch holes in the room



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partitions, break windows, turn over beds, pull mirrors off the wall — to mention only a few vandalistic acts they commit.

One Pentagon official commented that it was good to put women in the U.S. Military Academy because it brought refinement to the place. The last thing I found that I needed in combat was refinement. Let me tell you what kind of environment most of my combat soldiers came from. They came from the honky-tonks, the truck stops, the coal mines, the ghettos. They were rough and had been fighting all of their lives. Once in combat, they got their chance to do some real fighting. Killing became the single occupation uppermost in their thoughts. Their manhood and their survival were at stake, depending upon their ability to eliminate their opponents. They were more afraid of what their team members thought of their ability to commit mayhem than they were of the enemy. Physical weaklings are despised in combat.

### **Femmes Fatales?**

High defense authorities and the major media, who are proponents of the Women's Movement, will tell you that the initiation of female soldiers into combat training is a success. They project distorted statistics that lead the ordinary citizen to believe that women meet all requirements satisfactorily. As an example, they inform the public that women undergo the same physical training tests as those of the male soldier. What they do not say is that the requirements for women in these tests are less demanding. You can hardly pick up a magazine or watch television without someone purporting to "prove" that females in the service have as much capability in physical strength as males through such examples as a female soldier firing a rifle on the range, picking up a 58-pound round of ammunition, or jumping out of an airplane in a parachute. The public does not hear that combat isn't a series of isolated actions such as firing a rifle on the range without being fired back at, or making one long march and then returning to a hot shower, or jumping out of an airplane in a parachute and then returning to the barracks, or lifting 58 pounds once or twice with rest in between.

Combat is a long, terrifying, grueling, noisy, and confusing environment; and procedures that seem simple on a firing range become difficult or baffling under fire. Rifles were found, as an example, on the battlefields of the War Between The States with as many as 13 reloads in the barrel. The owners were so rattled by the experience of combat that they forgot to fire their weapons before reloading them. The media blatantly ignore the fact that what makes combat different from any other activity is its most pronounced characteristic — violence. Violence calls for force and force calls for physical strength. Physical strength is needed, not only to fight, but to survive and to perform the daily tasks required for living during prolonged periods of primitive, arduous, and stressful conditions.

The press purposely omits or minimizes the lowering of standards to accommodate women soldiers. How many of the following inconvenient facts have been reported:

- The cancellation of the training exercise "Slide For Life" at Fort Meade, Maryland after a female recruit, who lacked the hand-grip strength needed to hang on, plunged to her death;
- The extra minute given to women at the Air Force Academy to prevent 81 percent of them from washing out on the two-mile run;
- The shorter days and reduced physical requirements for women in Airborne courses;
- The waiving for female cadets at West Point of the minimum six pull-up requirement (because, on average, the women soldiers cannot do even one), they are required only to hang from the bar for a specified period of time, (the so-called Flex Arm Hang), and the prohibition of female participation in



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boxing, wrestling, and contact sports;

- The reduction of the bolt spring pressure in the female cadet's rifle from eight to five pounds (because the women could not get their bolts up during inspection, which of course could cause the rifle to malfunction when fired); and
- The pairing of women only against other women in Pugil stick training? How does any of this prepare a woman to fight a man?

### **Nice Personalities**

One of the arguments that feminists in the Pentagon use for promoting large groups of women into the service is that the female soldier creates fewer behavioral problems than the male (barroom fights, drunken brawls, etc.). The feminist logic clearly proves the point that women do not like to fight as men do. It should come as no surprise that it is these scrappy male soldiers, proud of their masculinity and bellicosity, who normally make the best fighting men and are predominant among our finest heroes in combat.

The National Organization for Women says that size is not always a factor. But size without physical strength becomes quite a liability. They also say that technological advances have converted wars into push-button conflicts and diminish the importance of extraordinary strength. Nevertheless, there are no push-button wars today, nor will there be any in the near future. I know of no job — military or non-military — that is accomplished *solely* by pushing buttons. For example, how does one cut and lay heavy wire throughout the ravines, gulleys, and jungles by pushing a button, or lift a bulky 200-pound camouflage net over a big gun emplacement? If button-pushing is the order of the day and the future, why do the U.S. and the USSR still train soldiers to dig foxholes, fight with a bayonet, drive tanks, carry and lay heavy mines? Furthermore, 90 percent of combat is being able to perform the tasks needed to survive, whereas only 10 percent of it is actual fighting. It takes manual labor to survive. There are no push buttons that will build a snow cave as a shelter to prevent freezing to death in the hard-driven snow, or pull a heavy artillery piece out of a quagmire.

No matter how advanced our technology or how devastating our weapons, the skill of the soldier is the key to the success of arms. The effectiveness of modern weaponry is dependent on the minds, eyes, hands, skills, bellicose spirit, and *physical strength* of the soldier operating the equipment. No matter the degree of sophistication of the tools of war, there will always be, on some remote battlefield, two soldiers with a flashlight, bending under their ponchos, soaked to the bone, trying to coordinate their forces in a battle that by chance occurred somewhere on a map sheet they were never issued. Right now, today, there's a high probability that a fancy piece of gear somewhere in the world is being repaired — by an innovative member of our forces — with bubblegum and bailing wire.

Furthermore, a military unit is more than the equivalent of individuals exercising technical skills. These technical skills play only a small part in molding a fighting unit. It is male-to-male bonding that provides unit cohesion and combat effectiveness. Without this crucial bonding, units disintegrate under stress no matter how technically proficient or well-equipped they are. The presence of women and the inevitable liaisons that develop will destroy this bonding that takes place among men, which is so essential for their courage to face danger and death together. Unit cohesion is vital — it saves lives — and we should not trifle with it. Anyone who believes that male and female soldiers react to each other only in a businesslike way is naive. Sharing hardships intensifies sexuality and resentment. Strenuous training demands long, hard hours, great physical discomfort, and great physical and mental strain. Soldiers who have slogged neck deep in the Delta swamps of Vietnam, endured the frigid winter nights in the



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mountains of Korea, and split a can of C-rations in the hot deserts of Africa savor a unique bond. This bond may never develop into lasting friendships but, for a while, there is that intimacy that springs from sharing a trip to hell and back. Application of the coed concept to combat or combat support units is not only wrong but absurd. We might get by with this expensive and devastating foolishness in peacetime but, when national survival is at stake, it surely will result in disaster.

A strong defense is more than an increased budget, additional weapons systems, advanced technology, and more people. The most essential ingredients are esprit de corps, strong discipline, male-to-male bonding, high morale — all intangibles — and the ability of people to redeploy and perform efficiently on the job. These are the basic elements that make up a fighting unit. Without them, you lose. These are the same components the Women's Movement tends to destroy.

### **Down the Amazons**

Leading feminists point to the fact that Jewish women fought alongside men in the Israeli War of Independence and that the Soviets placed women in combat roles during World War II. The Soviets used women in the darkest days of the war only after millions of men had been slaughtered. Obviously, it did not work out too well because they abandoned the concept of women in combat immediately after the war, and today they have only 10,000 women in a 4.8 million Armed Force (less than one percent of the total). This alone should tell you what they think of women warriors. Compare the U.S. female strength today of over 10 percent (12 percent in the Air Force) with that of the Soviet Union and it becomes rather clear that this high percentage is due to the Women's Movement, not combat experience.

In 1966 the defense minister of Israel, Moshe Dayan, spent a day with my battalion in Vietnam. He told me that Israeli women were placed in combat in the 1948 War of Independence, but were withdrawn permanently from the front three weeks later because the mixed-sex units suffered such heavy casualties. He explained that the War of Independence was a low intensity conflict characterized by the employment of a limited use of small arms weapons, land mines, interspersed small periodic fire fights, and some individual actions accompanied by long periods of time with little contact. Furthermore, the war was fought at home — in many cases right in the front yard, where many conveniences not normally found in combat were at hand. Everyone had to fight, for they were defending their homes. The women were familiar with their surroundings and could take advantage of some of the comforts found in a normal home environment, like well water and a clean place to rest. Most important, they had the assistance of their husbands, brothers, sons, and families, who were very much concerned with their welfare. All of these things make a difference to the combat soldier. There was no continuous pounding of long artillery bombardments, no tank shock action, daily aircraft bombings, napalm runs, or massive waves of attacking enemy overrunning positions by the hundreds with the cold steel of a bayonet.

Even this one-time experience with women in a low intensity conflict was enough for the Israelis, for they have taken women completely out of the combat roles. Colonel Dalia Raz, formally Chief of the Israeli Army-Women Contingent, said, "The most equal job is combat, but we don't want it because of what happened to our women in the last war in which they fought."

I only wish those who push for drafting and placing women in combat could see it as I have. Are they ready to see their daughters and wives exposed to the wrath of the enemy because they could not dig into the hard ground in time for protection? Do they wish to have them subjected to the stench of ripened bodies left in the sun several days, fumigation by aircraft being required daily to minimize





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nausea? Do they want them out on recovery patrols to shovel up decomposed human flesh into rubber sacks for identification purposes? Do they want them to hear the screams of burning human torches, trapped in the entanglements of barbed wire after napalm cans are exploded? Are they ready to see our women horribly mangled in a trapped mine field that no one can penetrate? Have the feminists thought about what our women would suffer from the dregs of our own army alone, not to mention those of the enemy? How can we reconcile our moral perceptions of women with these immoralities or war?

Finally, when the chips are down and the order comes to go for broke, who is going to carry that heavy ammunition up the hill? Who is going to strap that 20-pound flame thrower on his back and climb up the steep rocky slopes of hill 812 to flush out the enemy? I will tell you who. It will be left to those physically fit, not our female soldiers, who will become a burden on others, reducing combat effectiveness and increasing the likelihood of casualties of both men and women.

No woman, even as a volunteer, should have the right to go into combat simply because she desires to do so. It is not a question of what she wants or of her right. It is a matter of jeopardizing the lives of soldiers, who depend upon all members of the team to do their full share, and of the right of every American citizen to have the strongest national defense possible to protect his and her freedom. It is capitalizing on the differences between men and women that produces maximum effectiveness, not the channeling of various types of abilities into the same mold.

The primary purpose of the Armed Forces is to fight and win when diplomacy fails — nothing else. In order to achieve that goal, members of the Armed Forces must be the best. Our soldiers are taught out of necessity to be brutal and to kill. Like it or not, these are the talents that win battles. It is immoral to place our daughters in this role when it is not necessary. Women are essential in the procreation of life rather than in its destruction. Our fighting men must be tough enough to defend us against any enemy — and our women must provide the gentleness needed to rehabilitate our servicemen into good family members upon their return from battle.



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