

WEAK LINK:
THE FEMINIZATION OF THE AMERICAN MILITARY

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The feminization of the American military is perhaps the greatest peacetime military deception ever perpetrated."

With that opening salvo, Brian Mitchell mounts a full-scale assault on one of the sacred cows of the contemporary American military. His mission is to show the American people that their military empresses have no clothes. He bares all the relevant facts, garnered from sociological studies and the official reports of several service branches. And he reveals the stark, naked truth that the continued presence of so many thousands of uniformed women in the armed forces of the United States not only has eroded the morale of the majority of male soldiers, sailors, and airmen and undermined the classic military values of hierarchical command, obedience, and self-abnegation. The expanding role of these women has also crippled our very national defense posture!

Brian Mitchell may expect a murderous counterfire from the feminists and their cronies in government, academe, and the upper echelons of the military establishment, who receive the brunt of his criticism. He may even find his present position in jeopardy as a reporter for the *Navy Times*. But if Mitchell proves unable to fend off the fusillades of his opponents, he is nevertheless prepared by training and temperament to go down fighting.

A seven-year veteran of the U.S. Army, Mitchell served as an Airborne-Ranger infantry officer and intelligence agent, demonstrating his military moxie by earning the Expert Infantryman Badge and senior parachutist wings. He's been there. And now that he's out of uniform, he can, unhindered by the same military discipline and honor code currently in jeopardy, demythologize the new feminist orthodoxy and expose the Big Lie that the feminist zealots have foisted on the military and the American people.

Despite occasional militaristic depic-

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tions of women in classic mythologies, the American military ethos has never incorporated the distaff side of humanity. There are no Valkyries or Amazons or helmet-clad Athenas in our collective consciousness. For every un-uniformed Molly Pitcher who has taken up arms in the heat of battle, there have been hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Betsy Rosses, whose contributions to national security are strictly supportive rather than directly in the line of fire. Even in World War II—the era of the legendary "Rosie the Riveter," the *civilian* role model for women—the number of women in military uniform was negligible.

Enter the feminists. Mitchell's juxtaposition of the battle for the Equal Rights Amendment and the institution of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) in the early 1970s may seem somewhat contrived. And his narrative goes into a tailspin in the last two chapters after expending all of his ammunition fulminating against feminism in contemporary American society. But Mitchell is right on target in linking the burgeoning feminist-dominated "women's movement" with the proliferation of women in military uniform.

The feminists and their weak-willed accomplices within the upper echelons of the military services and the Department of Defense conquered this previously all-male bastion by executing perfectly a classic three-pronged attack. The three phases of this political and ideological warfare may be termed "reshaping," "reclassifying," and "redefining." In each phase the advocates of women in uniform vigorously sought to overturn traditional views and practices by all manner of means at their disposal including, ultimately, the Big Lie.

First, the reshaping of values substituted "equality" and "androgyny" for the more familiar virtues entailed in a masculine, hierarchical community. Though an obvious oxymoron, the "androgynous warrior" became the military ideal for cadets and midshipmen at the service academies during the 1970s. In accordance with militant feminist orthodoxy, distinctions between the genders, whether physical or psychological, were either minimized to allow women entry into tradi-

tionally male jobs and units or stressed when the survival of women in their new assignments was at stake. The issue of physical strength is typical. When women soldiers, sailors, and airmen failed as a group to meet even minimal requirements of physical readiness, the military established separate, significantly lower "standards" for women, while protesting, seemingly innocently, that it was not fostering a double standard. When this tack proved ludicrous, the next move was to pretend that the difference was unimportant. The emerging "androgynous" ideal simply devalues physical prowess as a military virtue.

Second, the most obvious biological obstacle to female warrioriness—pregnancy—was supposedly bypassed by reclassifying this God-given, uniquely female privilege as a "temporary disability." This brainchild of civilian feminists placed the military, however, into a double-bind. If a pregnant service member elects to leave the service, she increases the attrition rate and undermines the stability of her unit. If she chooses, however, to stay, her activities become so restricted that she poses a burden to her fellow soldiers, since they must pick up the slack for the duration of her "disability." In its zeal to guarantee women's "rights," the feminized military establishment ignores the disturbing impact of pregnant soldiers on their comrades. Mitchell describes eloquently the role conflict between mothers and warriors: "The killing spirit and motherly love are necessarily inimical to each other, and . . . where the two are combined, the one is weakened and the other perverted."

Third, the champions of women in uniform have resorted to verbal flimflams while redefining concepts such as fraternization, single-parenthood, and combat.

Fraternization used to mean any social involvement between officers and enlisted men. It was a clear distinction and a matter of good discipline in preparation for combat, when authority, not friendship, might lead to victory. In the more permissive military resulting from the widespread presence of women, officers need only avoid social contact with those under their own command. This has opened a Pandora's box of imprudent trysts between men and women in uniform irrespective of rank.

The Pentagon began in 1980 to include as single parents not only those parents with actual custody of children but those who merely pay child support. Thus it could claim disingenuously that three-quarters of single-parents in the military are males and conveniently deny the charge that single-parenthood is a predominantly female problem, which erodes unit cohesion

and siphons off valuable resources that could be devoted to military missions.

The redefinition of "combat" leads to the heart of the problem as Mitchell sees it. To meet the demands of the feminists, the Pentagon has yielded so much ground on the question of women in combat roles that in any major conflict thousands of women would certainly find themselves effectively engaged in battle. The modern battlefield is so fluid that even support elements in what was once known as the "rear" would be subject to direct attack. But to allow women to serve in a wider array of military specialties, the meaning of combat has been refined to the rarefied level of direct physical contact between opposing forces at close range. Even this shell game has not satisfied the most ardent feminists, who continue to insist that the restrictions on women in combat be eliminated altogether.

Mitchell never explains systematically how military women have eroded our national defense. Scattered throughout an essentially historical narrative one may find anecdotal evidence pointing to the adverse effects of women on the presumed ability of the U.S. armed forces to fulfill their classic mission: to engage and prevail over the enemy in battle. This evidence includes, for example, the Army's selection of inferior pistols and rifles to accommodate women's lesser physical strength, the greater medical non-availability and attrition rates of women, and challenges to male-bonding and the morale of the male service members.

The author's solution to this problem is also far-fetched and unrealistic. "The AVF might still exploit the need for young American men to prove themselves," Mitchell concludes, "and easily make up the number of women now in service, if it aggressively portrayed itself as a place for men only." He would simply scuttle the Army's recruitment slogan, "Be all you can be!" and replace it with the Marine Corps' version, "We're looking for a few good men!" Not bad on paper: dumping a selfish, individualistic, career-oriented appeal in favor of a true warrior's call to arms. But the women in uniform are now so firmly entrenched that there is no chance they will abandon their military careers in large numbers—at least not without a fight.

Perhaps Mitchell has instigated a new guerrilla war for the body and soul of the American military. It is hardly a coincidence that that body has acquired a more distinct feminine form even as its soul has, since the inglorious American withdrawal from Vietnam, suffered a crisis of confidence and an erosion of the will to fight. □

Denver is a great place if you're a dog. They haven't got many fleas here, and heartworm's unheard of. But it goes beyond that. Denver makes a dog feel at home.

I moved here near the middle of September, flying out with Shot Shark-rifle—a lowborn English setter—while the rest of the family put our Virginia affairs in order. When we left Washington—I in economy, Shot in cargo—it was 80 degrees; when we landed three and a half hours later, it was snowing.

Poor old Shot had shed most of his fur back East and stood shaking in the cold West wind while I called for lodging from a payphone. On a hunch, I asked the Holiday Inn receptionist if they took dogs.

"Of course," she said. A comparison shopper, I called another hotel, which didn't. The third place, a Days Inn, also took dogs and was fifteen dollars cheaper per night. Delighted, we got back in the rental car, which by now bore an eight-dollar parking ticket. Law and order is not an abstraction here in the West.

Capitol Hill in Denver is what they call a transitional neighborhood. Our motor inn sat near a block-long strip of sex shops, numerous liquor stores (one with a drive-through window), and a nightclub featuring music by an ensemble called the Butthole Surfers, a popular local group. There's a knifing now and then and one young man was arrested in my hotel for doing a striptease before an appreciative audience of vice-squad officers, who repaid the favor by booking him on a male prostitution charge. As you can see, this isn't the boondocks.

As Shot and I strolled around the hill many residents stopped to pet the old boy, often engaging him in conversation, but not of the type that passes twixt a matron and her poodle. Up on Capitol Hill (one of the steps leading into the capitol building rests 5,280 feet above sea level) the chief subjects are

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women, women, and women. There was also some uniformity in the perception, which seemed to follow the model: "Pooch, you think your master might be able to spare old Rick a buck?" This is the Capitol Hill version of the request to share the Grey Poupon.

Which isn't to say that it's all take and no give. On a Sunday afternoon, when a six-pack of Foster's would go well with the Broncos game, Shot and I walk to the drive-through window at Scooter's Liquors, where the cashier completes the transaction with a friendly request to come back. As we turn to leave, he calls "Wait a minute," then leans out the window and gives Shot a milkbone.

Denver's a nice place for people too, although it isn't all that's advertised in the East. Knowledgeable Washington sources insisted my allergy problems would end once I hit the Mile High City, which has not been the case. Others said it was pretty much like an Eastern city in habits and manners. Also untrue.

On my first day of work, for instance, I attended a press luncheon hosted by the University of Colorado. After talking with several of the female officials (some of whom bore facial moles their vainglorious sisters in Washington would not have tolerated), I sat down and chatted amiably with my table mates. After salad was served all around, I dug in.

"I guess we aren't going to say grace," said a woman sitting across from me.

"Well I don't know," said the woman to my right, whose fork lay reverently beside her plate.

I asked forgiveness for rushing into things, explaining that I had just arrived from Washington, where the only time we say grace is April 15, in anticipation of the incoming tax receipts. We all had a laugh, then it was explained that public lunches often begin with a prayer. Not an eye rolled as this information was imparted.

This isn't to say that everyone in Denver is so civilized. During another lunch, this one on the 16th Street Mall,

for this is a semi-arid area, then come the Mexican sodas. Then comes the bill: for us, \$5,000, not including a fence, which will cost \$1,500 more. But it's beautiful down near the foothills. At sunset, clouds over the mountains turn bright gold, while across on the other horizon the sky turns bright red. The youngest boy took it all in one evening and announced that in Colorado there are two suns. On other days you can sun yourself on the patio while watching thunderheads fire broadsides into the earth thirty miles away.

Just beyond the foothills, a mind used to focusing on continuing resolutions and other bits of life's small print is confronted by 14,000-foot peaks and a blazing blue sky. The mind stretches and the head spins. You also see people, like the man trout fishing at 8,000 feet. "Hell, I know all about your Eastern mountains," he says. "We've got dump piles bigger than them." And unlike those smaller mountains, many of the roads winding up the Rockies are short on guardrails. I tell the fisherman that in Washington, not only are there rails on the bridges, there are suicide fences as well. "Out here," he says, "if you want to drive off the mountain, we consider that your business."

Back home, we watch the sun set behind the foothills. If you rise early enough, you might see a coyote in the field out back, or a mule deer. Within the last couple of months there have been over 200 bear sightings, and up north a kid was pulled off his bike by a mountain lion. He did not survive. We found a black widow in the family room, and it's nothing for Shot to kick up a big jackrabbit in the field behind the house. He gives chase but they run away from him as if he were standing still.

Most of the time, however, Shot prefers lying in the dirt chewing on a bone while the rest of us gawk at the great immensity, like the Kettles in Manhattan. The bones are free at the local supermarket and the butcher leaves on plenty of meat. I tell you, the only way we'll ever get this dog to leave this place is to shoot him. □

