

What's Your Opinion?

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Restate Question

QPR

2 sentences that defend your first reason (use information from reading)

2 sentences that defend your second reason (use information from reading)

Should women be allowed in combat?

Women make up 15 percent of America's armed forces, but military policy prohibits them from serving in combat zones.

YES

Where and how women serve in the military should be based on ability and training, not gender. Policies that prohibit the military from using the skills of all servicemembers should be changed.

Today, more than 350,000 women serve in our military, with some 30,000 in Afghanistan and Iraq.

But policy now limits where women serve in the Army and Marines. Specifically closed are infantry, armor, and most artillery units, and women cannot be assigned to units whose primary mission is to engage the enemy. These policies are based on what is believed to be the will of the American public, not women's proven abilities.

Women have always fought and died in America's wars. (As of June, 41 women have died in operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.) They've led men in battle, been prisoners of war, fired lethal weapons, and operated our most sophisticated systems. They fly combat aircraft and serve on combat ships. Women meet the military's physical and mental standards, are technically proficient, and are highly trained war fighters and leaders. From my 28 years in the Air Force, I know that servicemen consider women part of the team.

In today's all-volunteer force, women have accepted the challenges, responsibilities, and dangers of military service, just as the men have. With today's battlefield and the war on terror, there are no front lines, and every unit



regardless of size or mission has the potential to engage with the enemy.

Why handicap our military with outdated and unrealistic policies

restricting the use of capable people? It is time such policies were abolished.

—**Brig. Gen. Wilma Vaught**
U.S. Air Force (Retired)

NO

The nation's pride in our military women does not justify assignments in direct ground combat, which involves more than the experience of being in danger, or even the risk of ambush.

Forget about Lara Croft, and think about real-life infantry, Marines, and Special Operations Forces that engage the enemy in places like Fallujah in Iraq. These men carry electronic equipment, weapons, ammunition, heavy body armor, and water weighing 50 to 100 pounds. Such burdens would weigh more heavily on smaller female soldiers who have, on average, 45 to 50 percent less upper-body strength and 25 to 30 percent less aerobic capacity, which is essential for endurance.



In the Army's own surveys, 90 percent of enlisted women have said they oppose involuntary combat assignments on the same basis as men. They know that training for female soldiers is modified to compensate for physical differences, but there can be no modifications on the battlefield.

In direct combat, women would not have an equal opportunity to survive, or to help fellow soldiers survive.

Even if physical capabilities were objectively measured and equal, coed combat assignments would affect discipline and unit cohesion. Women lose more duty time due to medical issues, including pregnancy, and their absence would be particularly disruptive in combat units where concentration and mutual trust are essential for survival.

At times, we have no choice about sending young men to war, but we do have a choice when it comes to sending young women. Changing that would be a mistake.

—**Elaine Donnelly**
President, Center for Military Readiness