

# Ramboettes needn't apply

**W**omen, says a spring report of the department of national defence, are unfit for combat units because they lack the necessary physical strength and endurance. Women's groups have reacted with howls of indignation, demanding that females be placed into combat units.

Should women, in our age of anything-you-can-do-I-can-do-better be allowed into combat units? Thousands of years of military experience, and basic common sense, give a resounding no. Body strength and endurance are not the real issues. Women are certainly less strong than men and smaller. Yet 100-lb. Vietnamese soldiers managed to beat 180-lb. American soldiers.

Women have also shown the ability to withstand the psychic stress of combat situations: The age of the hysterical, fainting female is thankfully past. Nevertheless, women should not be mixed into combat formations because doing so would destroy the unit's vitally important psychological cohesion.

Soldiers in combat do not usually fight for love of country or any other abstract principle. Plunged into the seething, chaotic terror of battle, they fight for their buddies and regiments. Men in battle develop bonds that are often stronger than those between men and women; regiments become stronger groupings than natural families.

Share a tent in a monsoon; huddle together under shellfire; sleep safe knowing that your partner is on watch; go into battle secure that your buddies will bring you back if you are wounded. In short, the unit lives, fights and dies in mutual support.

Interposing women into this intense, pressure-cooker atmosphere is like getting sand in one's eye. As any male knows, put a woman in an all-male group, whether sportsmen, campers or soldiers, and trouble ensues. A small number of young

## Punch



"Heaven? You must be joking. And I wouldn't stand so close to the edge if I were you."

**ERIC  
MARGOLIS**



women introduced into combat units filled with randy men — as soldiers always are — will quickly result in fighting, animosity and bad blood. The vital cohesion of the unit will collapse and this means loss of combat effectiveness.

Then there is the problem of rape. We have forgotten how rape has traditionally been a fringe benefit of soldiering. Until recently, advancing armies were expected to rape all young and not-so-young women in their paths. For example, troops of the Red Army advancing into eastern Germany in 1945 raped virtually every female, from six-year-old girls to grandmothers.

A German friend once told me how her aunt had been raped outside of Dresden by 50 Russian soldiers — and had to be shot by her husband who then killed himself. Do we want to see this happen to our own female soldiers?

The Israelis, who have much successful experience in using female soldiers in support functions, have made a clear point of keeping them out of combat units. We should also follow their proven example. How would our soldiers feel, dug into trenches, having to listen to captured female members of their unit screaming as they are repeatedly raped by enemy troops? Unit cohesion might disintegrate as men sought to rescue their captured girlfriends.

Putting women into combat slots is fine provided that our ground forces never fight a real war and remain a glorified employment agency. Feminists are demanding combat jobs because they want better pay, not because they want to close with the enemy.

But, in wartime, we will have a far greater need for women in defence factories and support services than in combat units. In fact, we do not need women at all to flesh out combat formations. If Canada, for example, mobilized the same percentage of males as Switzerland, it could have a field army of four million men.

Nor can our threadbare military afford the extra costs of integrating women into combat units: New barracks, separate toilets, gynecologists, etc. For a nation that cannot afford to buy a single new tank, whose male tank gunners cannot shoot, such new expenditures would be ludicrous. What Canada needs in its feeble combat units — now about one-third the strength of the New York City police department — is more men, more weapons, more war stocks, not a few token women.

If we must experiment with such foolishness, then why not have our would-be female combat soldiers get a taste of real war by joining all-male football teams — with the defeated female players going to the winning team?