Beyond the Band of Brothers

Women can’t fight. This assumption lies at the heart of the combat exclusion, a policy that was fiercely defended as essential to national security, despite evidence that women have been contributing to hostile operations now and throughout history. This book examines the role of women in the US military and the key arguments used to justify the combat exclusion, in light of the decision to reverse the policy in 2013. Megan MacKenzie considers the historic role of the combat exclusion in shaping American military identity and debunks claims that the recent policy change signals a new era for women in the military. Placing the policy in a broader context, MacKenzie shows how women’s exclusion from combat reaffirms male supremacy in the military and sustains a key military myth, the myth of the band of brothers. She traces the band of brothers myth from Freud to HBO in her critical analysis and history of the role of women in combat. This book will be welcomed by scholars and students of military studies, gender studies, social and military history, and foreign policy.

Megan MacKenzie is a senior lecturer in the Department of Government and International Relations at the University of Sydney. Her research centers on gender and security. Her book *Female Soldiers in Sierra Leone: Sex, Security and Post-Conflict Development* (2012) included interviews with more than fifty female soldiers who participated in Sierra Leone’s civil war.
Beyond the Band of Brothers

The US Military and the Myth that Women Can’t Fight

MEGAN MACKENZIE

University of Sydney
For Jason, with love
Contents

List of tables

Acknowledgments x

Introduction: myths, men, and policy making 1

Why myths? 8

Myth as securitizing 9

The band of brothers myth 10

1 The combat exclusion is a story we tell ourselves . . . about men 19

The military excludes women to protect men 20

2 The disintegration of the combat exclusion in Iraq and Afghanistan 42

Operational realities 44

Legal challenges 58

How do you change a policy that doesn't exist? 64

3 It just doesn't feel right: emotion and the combat exclusion policy 75

Gut reactions, divine concerns, and threats to nature 79

Military and soldier identity 85

4 Faster, stronger, more male: women and the failure of physical standards 98

i. Are women weaker than men? 102

ii. Is physical difference insurmountable? 103

iii. What are the physical standards for men and women in the military, and are there double standards for women? 106
viii CONTENTS

iv. Are there combat-specific physical requirements? 111
v. Do combat roles require enhanced, or different, physical capabilities than other roles within the military? 112
vi. Do physical standards discriminate against women? 116
vii. Is the physical argument only about standards? 117

5 Sex, cohesion, and national security 134
Defining cohesion 136
Dismantling the foundations of the sex and cohesion hypothesis 141
Cohesion as gendered: the bonding of brothers 149

6 Using online debates to map public reaction to the combat exclusion 155
Methods for online content 157
Analysis of three articles 165
“Overdue: Why It’s Time to End the U.S. Military's Female Combat Ban” by Megan MacKenzie, October 2012 165
“The Truth about Women in Combat,” David Frum, March 2013 177
“End of Combat Ban Means Women Finally Fully Integrated into Military,” Gayle Tzemach Lemmon, January 24, 2013 (the day of the announcement that the combat exclusion would be lifted) 185
Feminism gone too far? 190

Conclusion 194
How do we move beyond the band of brothers? 197

Bibliography 200
Index 219
# Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Physical requirements for service personnel</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>MacKenzie Article Comments</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Frum Article Comments</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lemmon Article Comments</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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