

“Very Democratic”: US and British Press Hail “Liberal Policy” which Allows Women to Fight in the Frontline

Propaganda Alert

By [Cem Ertür](#)

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Region: [Europe](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#), [Women's Rights](#)

Excerpts from:

Equality at the front line: Pentagon is set to lift ban on women in combat roles

by Elisabeth Bumiller and Thom Shanker,

New York Times, 25 January 2013

[U.S.] Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta is lifting the military’s official ban on women [soldiers] in combat, which will open up hundreds of thousands of additional front-line jobs to them, senior defense officials said Wednesday.

The groundbreaking decision overturns a 1994 Pentagon rule that restricts women from artillery, armor, infantry and other such combat roles, even though in reality women have frequently found themselves in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan; according to the Pentagon, hundreds of thousands of women have deployed in those conflicts. As of last year, more than 800 women [soldiers] had been wounded in the two wars and more than 130 had died. [...]The decision clearly fits into the broad and ambitious liberal agenda, especially around matters of equal opportunity, that [President Obama laid out this week in his Inaugural Address.](#)



EQUALITY AT THE FRONT LINE: PENTAGON IS SET TO LIFT BAN ON WOMEN IN COMBAT ROLES

By ELISABETH BUMILLER
and THOM SHANKER

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta is lifting the military's official ban on women in combat, which will open up hundreds of thousands of additional front-line jobs to them, senior defense officials said Wednesday.

The groundbreaking decision overturns a 1994 Pentagon rule that restricts women from artillery, armor, infantry and other such combat roles, even though in reality women have frequently found themselves in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, where more than 20,000 have served. As of last year, more than 800 women had been wounded in the two wars and more than 130 had died.

Defense officials offered few details about Mr. Panetta's decision but described it as the beginning of a process to allow the branches of the military to put the change into effect. Defense officials said Mr. Panetta had made the decision on the recommendation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Women have long chafed under the combat restrictions and have increasingly pressured the Pentagon to catch up with the reality on the battlefield. The move comes as Mr. Panetta is about to step down from his post and would leave him with a major legacy after only 18 months in the job.

The decision clearly fits into



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Cpl. Christina Oliver of the Marines on patrol in 2010.

Joint Chiefs Urged End to 1994 Rule

the broad and ambitious liberal agenda, especially around matters of equal opportunity, that President Obama laid out this week in his Inaugural Address. But while it had to have been approved by him, and does not require action by Congress, it appeared Wednesday that it was in large part driven by the military itself. Some midlevel White House staff members were caught by surprise by the decision, indicating that it had not gone through an extensive review there.

Mr. Panetta's decision came after he received a Jan. 9 letter from Gen. Martin E. Dempsey,

the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who stated in strong terms that the armed service chiefs all agreed that "the time has come to rescind the direct combat exclusion rule for women and to eliminate all unnecessary gender-based barriers to service."

A military official said the change would be implemented "as quickly as possible," although the Pentagon is allowing three years, until January 2016, for final decisions from the services.

Each branch of the military will have to come up with an implementation plan in the next several months, the official said. If a branch of the military decides that a specific job should not be opened to a woman, representatives of that branch will have to ask the defense secretary for an exception.

"To implement these initiatives successfully and without sacrificing our war-fighting capability or the trust of the American people, we will need time to get it right," General Dempsey wrote.

It will be carried out during what the administration describes as the end of the American combat role in Afghanistan, the nation's longest war.

A copy of General Dempsey's letter was provided by a Pentagon official under the condition of anonymity.

The letter noted that this action was meant to ensure that women as well as men "are given the opportunity to serve their country."

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New York Times, 24 January 2013

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/24/us/pentagon-says-it-is-lifting-ban-on-women-in-combat.html?pagewanted=print>

Excerpts from:

Women troops on march towards frontline combat

Armed forces set to follow US example by 2017

by Deborah Haynes, The Times, 25 January 2013

Women in the British military are likely to be allowed to serve in combat units after a ground-breaking decision by the United States to lift a ban on frontline female fighters.

Britain must review its policy of preventing female soldiers from applying for certain jobs within four years. [...] Jim Murphy, the [Labour Party's] Shadow Defence Secretary (*), urged the [Conservative Party] Government to review Britain's ban on women participating in the sharpest end of warfare. [...] "We in Britain must maximise everyone's talent and courage for our military and so should look again at UK policy"

[said Mr Murphy.] Women soldiers, sailors and aircrew already undertake a wide range of tasks that put them in the line of fire, including as medics, intelligence officers and fighter pilots. They will also soon serve on submarines.

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Women troops on march towards frontline combat

Armed Forces set to follow US example by 2017

Deborah Haynes Defence Editor

Women in the British military are likely to be allowed to serve in combat units after a ground-breaking decision by the United States to lift a ban on frontline female fighters.

Britain must review its policy of preventing female soldiers from applying for certain jobs within four years. A U-turn yesterday by Leon Panetta, the outgoing US Defence Secretary, means that the rules can be rewritten. "It seems highly likely that the US experience and decision will influence the UK's position on this issue," a defence source said. A second source equated the ban with that on homosexuals in the Armed Forces.

The Times can reveal that 55 women in the Territorial Army have mistakenly been recruited into combat units in breach of military rules. A spokesman

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for the Ministry of Defence (MoD) said that the women, in the Royal Armoured Corps and the Infantry, were serving in a support role and would not be allowed to jump on a plane to Helmand.

This could all change, however, after Mr Panetta's announcement, which has thrown up the biggest challenge to the British ban on women joining the infantry. "Every person in today's military has made a solemn commitment to fight and, if necessary, to die for our nation's defence," Mr Panetta said. "Their career success and their specific opportunities should be based solely on their ability to successfully carry out an assigned mission."

Jim Murphy, the Shadow Defence Secretary, urged the Government to review Britain's ban on women participating in the sharpest end of warfare. "Women are already making an important contribution on the front line,



Britain has already put female medics in the line of fire in Afghanistan, and women serve as fighter pilots and will soon be able to join submarine crews

including in Afghanistan. Time has now come to look again at the role of women in close combat," he said.

"The US Government decision that women can be deployed in combat has implications for all forces. We in Britain must maximise everyone's talent and courage for our military and so should look again at UK policy."

Women soldiers, sailors and aircrew already undertake a wide range of tasks that put them in the line of fire, including as medics, intelligence officers and fighter pilots. They will also soon serve on submarines.

The new-found ability for US women to serve alongside men, no matter what the role, will accelerate calls for reform in Britain — particularly because of the close relationship between the two militaries.

One senior male Army officer believed that the current ban was as indefensible as a previous one on open homosexuality in the Armed Forces. "The military exists for war-fighting: killing and risking death. However, this was the Army's excuse for sacking both pregnant service women and gay personnel: blocking women from dismounted close combat is more of the same," he said.

"The second-order effects are insidious: senior generals are almost all infantry and Royal Armoured Corps — running them as an exclusive men's club imposes a de facto glass ceiling. Standards must be maintained, but women should have an equal opportunity to compete on their merits, provided they pass the same tests as men."

Joanne Mackowski, a researcher at the Royal United Services Institute, the London-based military think-tank, is doing a PhD on gender in the military. "It is an issue that is never going to die down given the pressure for equality in any other walk of life," she said. "This issue is not going to roll over and die and the Army has got to take a stance on it. Opening the door does not mean that a vast number of people will be coming through. You have to be a
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The Times, 25 January 2013

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