

Armed farces or a few good men?

The image, mission of the armed forces continues to be hotly debated

Columnist



Steve May
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graduate students

It is ironic how Americans criticize and demean the United States military, the very institution which protects the right to free speech. Everyone has a personal opinion of how the military should be run. However, many of those individuals have never actually served in the military.

It has become a common occurrence these days to pick at our military institutions. Scandals in several branches and academies have hit the papers and the national newscasts, giving food to the judgmental general public. Everyone, from cadets to the enlisted ranks, to officers, has been charged with a myriad of offenses, from the all-too-frequent sexual harassment to battery and murder. These severe occurrences have led to new regulations and scrutiny. In no way are these offenses condonable or excusable, but the frenzy in which added regulations and actions have been demanded by those outside the military has gone overboard.

The branches of the United States Armed Forces are not typical governmental agencies. They have an extremely specialized task which some often forget.

The basic duty of the military is to kill. Over 100,000 Iraqis were killed during Desert Storm. Whether in defense of the nation or its interests, its task is simple.

However, its purpose is not to be politically correct. To do the job the military is required to do, a certain type of person is needed. One must be patriotic, self-sacrificing and disciplined. One must have the ability to react instinctively under dire circumstances. It is not for everyone.

Members of the U.S. military are required to give up many of the rights ordinary citizens enjoy.

The right to privacy is sacrificed. Service men and women may have their quarters searched and their belongings confiscated at any time without warning.

They are held to a higher standard of responsibility. Individuals are not only responsible for their own actions, but for those of their families as well. An undisciplined child or mischievous spouse can impede or even end a healthy career.

The right to due process is also lost. In certain circumstances, one may be held without trial.

Individuality is sacrificed. To many civilians' dismay, soldiers are told what is appropriate and what is not in regard to professional and personal attire.

In the Marine Corps, the ability to wear civilian attire is a privilege, not a right.

It is difficult to apply what is deemed politically correct to the military without degrading its performance.

Open homosexuality in the military is not appropriate. It disrupts the bond and trust soldiers must have between one another. When one's life is on the line, one needs and expects complete trust. Whether homophobia is deemed wrong by many Americans, the fact remains it causes mistrust and disrupts unit cohesion. Members of the armed forces can not be forced to trust someone whose lifestyle they find repulsive.

A member of the Corps of the Cadets, who declined to be identified, voiced his opinion of gays in the military.

"Gays do not belong in the military," he said. "It's not conducive to a military lifestyle, especially in close quarters."

Women have become an even more integral part of the U.S. military, however they should never expect complete equality. When it comes to infantry warfare (hand-to-hand combat), the average woman is not as capable as the average man. It's not chauvinism — it's a fact of nature. In regard to arcade warfare, such as air-to-air combat and other forms of victimless combat, in which weapons of war are used at distances and are based on hand-eye coordination and mental abilities, women perform as well as men or even better. One should not classify the military as sexist due to the lack of complete integration.

Rich Wright, a senior business analysis major and a U.S. Marine Corps veteran, said the military is a different environment and needs to be treated accordingly.

Regarding the recent rash of sexual harassment cases, he said, "The Marine Corps doesn't have a problem like the Army and the Navy because they realize men and women are different."

Wright has no problem with gays in the military if their sexual preference is kept secret, but said it would definitely undermine morale and

disrupt the chain of command if made known.

"You learn from Day One that there's a hierarchy," he said. "You're not dealing with everyday situations. There has to be discipline and respect."

As Wright alluded, discipline and respect are the cornerstones of operations in the military. Their absence is a problem.

The military is not, nor has it ever been, an institution comparable to anything in the private sector. Without firsthand experience, it is hard to believe many critics of the military can hold the opinions they do.

The United States military is a watchdog. When it bites the hand of a prowler and performs its duty, it is praised. However, when it bites the hand of a friend, it is scolded for doing what it is trained to do.

Do not attempt to judge what you

Human nature always manages to get in the way, and it doesn't seem to be helping the U.S. Army's image these days.

With sexual harassment accusations flooding the Army since November and female cadets in the Citadel accusing males of attempting to set their clothes on fire, it is impressive Texas A&M's Corps of Cadets hasn't faced similar problems.

Although soldiers who commit acts of sexual harassment should be harshly punished, they should not be singled out for what occurs in every walk of life. However, the Army could take a few lessons from the Corps on creating an environment in which mutual respect can grow, decreasing

likelihood of harassment.

At the beginning of February, the Army's image took another shot when retired Sergeant Major Brenda Hoster accused the Army's highest ranked enlisted man, Sergeant Major Gene McKinney, of sexual harassment.

The same week, almost 500,000 soldiers began watching one of the Army's response to the flood of complaints a video in which the same McKinney declared that sexual harassment must come to an end.

Before publicly charging McKinney with sexual harassment, Hoster called the Army's sexual harassment hotline. In Time magazine, she said her call was nothing more than a frustrating experience with an untrained staff.

Although similar calls since last fall have resulted in more than 1,100 criminal probes, the Army could have dealt more effectively with charges of sexual harassment.

However, the private sector probably needs as much help with the problem of sexual harassment as the Armed Services — it just seems to get the most publicity.

What has come the way of the Armed Services in the way of scandal has been dealt with effectively, though not always promptly.

In 1991, the Navy received the first major charges of sexual harassment when naval aviators belonging to the Tailhook Association, made drunken fools of themselves by harassing females. After initially failing to identify the responsible officers, the Navy reacted by booting admirals and even the secretary of the navy.

The Air Force has taken steps to prevent sexual harassment by implementing sexual harassment training in 1982 and initiating a task force on discrimination and sexual harassment in 1994.

Although such measures are a step in the right direction, there is only so much that can be accomplished with policy. Sexual harassment is difficult to prevent, but the most effective way to deal with it is to create an environment in which it cannot thrive.

Columnist



Heather Pace
sophomore
English major

One guide to discrimination and sexual harassment, written by Lt. General Billy J. Boles, USAF, says: "Despite commanders' involvement and education programs, people will occasionally behave inappropriately. It takes a strong continuing commitment by everyone to minimize these behaviors and their effects."

Sexual harassment occurs most often because of a desire for power. Incidents of sexual harassment should decrease as some males discover, whether they like it or not, females are here to stay in the military.

Although the situation at A&M is still touchy, as indicated by several female cadets unwilling to be quoted, the situation is nowhere near as bad as it is at other places.

One former cadet said there were few incidents of harassment, but those she did see were dealt with quickly. She said the key for her was to gain the respect of her peers.

Another cadet said the problem is not so much sexual harassment as it is males not knowing how to deal with females. Although she said she hears comments that make some females uncomfortable, she just doesn't take her buddies seriously.

Tara Tripp, a junior English major and a member of the Corps, said her buddies spend more time defending her than offending her.

"My three other female buddies and I have been the first women to make it through our outfit since 1993, I believe, and we have never had any problems with sexual harassment," Tripp said. "If anything, our male buddies have been protective — like big brothers to us."

This continuing commitment has been developed naturally in the Corps in the form of relationships based on mutual trust and respect, not gender.

Matt Reynolds, a sophomore general studies major and a member of the Corps, said he has complete respect for the only female sophomore remaining in his outfit.

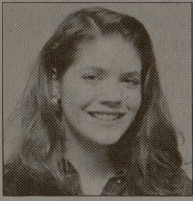
"I think she proves herself to be a worthy cadet because she does everything we do," Reynolds said. "She does even more than some people and she stays involved. I think she gains a lot of respect because of that. What people need to do is open their minds to new views and simply accept the fact that females can excel as much as males."

Give the Army a handful of soldiers and there are sure to be charges for sexual harassment — give the Armed Forces a handful of A&M cadets, and hopefully, it can win the war against sexual harassment.



Harsh adult punishments fail to rehabilitate juvenile criminals

Columnist



Courtney Phillips
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Juvenile crime is on every politician's hit list.

Tougher policies are touted by legislators of all parties, and some are talking about repealing the federal mandates which keep juveniles from being incarcerated in the same facilities as adults. Personal responsibility and the realization of crime's consequences are essential to today's youth, but the usefulness of rehabilitation must not be overlooked.

In an age when criminals rarely serve full sentences, society must decide whether to allow these young criminals to be released after extensive rehabilitation or to expose them to the self-rule and mayhem of the Texas Department of Corrections. Plato said when hu-

mans err, it is the result of poor teachings or bad genes. Today, most people would rightfully balk, saying individuals are always in charge of their actions — no one controls them. While no one can deny that environment has an impact on children, the common belief that they start out pure, but become corrupted by their environment, is not on target either.

Still, some people say the opposite — children start out as criminals and learn how to live according to society's rules. In William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, Golding toyed with a society's restrictions and showed how, if interdependencies were removed, humans would return to a basic criminal nature. In light of this

thinking, all students of Texas A&M are potential robbers, rapists and murderers. Furthermore, a belief in this basic nature is really much more democratic. People are much more likely to have compassion on a person if they recognize that deep down people are all the same. Of course, most Americans suffer from the prideful "I'm special and I'm different" mentality, and they cannot handle the thought of their own potential criminality.

Chip Harrison, commandant of a Texas Youth Commission boot camp, said disciplining kids and restructuring the way they think is more beneficial than yelling and abusing them.

"What good would that do?" he said, "These kids have been hollered at all their lives, they've had semiautomatics shoved in their faces. They've been stabbed. You think a little yelling is go-

ing to change them?"

This is clearly not the typical A&M student's upbringing.

Over the past few years, the TYC has been overhauling its programs in an effort to become more strict and tailored to individual situations. Its four-fold mission is to protect society from juvenile offenders, make the offenders productive while incarcerated, rehabilitate criminals and prevent future juvenile crime.

Staff workers are forming understanding relationships with the youths, but every waking second of the youths' lives is structured and demands the respect of their overseers. Uniforms are worn and for the first time in these kids' lives, someone expects productivity and humanity from them.

One can never know for sure how authentic the rehabilitation is. Howev-

er, the new direction TYC has taken in dealing with juvenile offenders seems to beat the lack of control and efficiency in the adult-justice system.

Juveniles stand a chance of being more productive members of society if given a chance to undergo rehabilitation. Moreover, communities would be a lot safer having tried to rehabilitate these juveniles than sealing their fate by categorizing them as hardened criminals through incarceration without rehabilitation.

Top-notch chemical dependency treatments, sexual offender programs and a stellar capital offender program help juveniles identify their bad choices and develop empathy for their victims. Meanwhile, Texas legislation should concentrate on encouraging higher standards for families and communities, two support systems lacking in the lives of most juvenile criminals.



MAIL CALL

12th man absent in G. Rollie White

Regards to Jamie Burch's "...let's tie hoops a horse laugh." Aggie basketball is plagued by low attendance and little fan support. Basketball is a fast-paced sport that's both exciting and fun to watch, but as Aggies, some of us don't know how to be basketball fans. Basketball games

should be characterized by its high-energy both on the court and in the stands. One problem is most A&M traditions were built around football, not basketball. Therefore, the role of the band and yell leaders should be different in conjunction with the different sports. The slow pace of band works well for football, but the music for basketball needs to build and maintain the momentum. There are times during the game when the coach calls a

20-second time-out to calm down his team—not the crowd. Often, the yell leaders take this time to quiet the crowd to do a yell. Unfortunately, that's just what the opponent needs. If a coach scouts our team in an earlier game, they know what an opportunity a 20-second time-out presents for them.

Fan support is the key and we need to create that high energy for the team. Anyone who has ever competed in sports knows that it's always easier when you have fans behind you. It is disheartening to our teams when they go to out of town games and see the support their opponents have and then come back to G. Rollie and have none. We need to learn to be basketball fans and that starts when we show up to the games. We have the opportunity to see great teams play in the new Big 12 Conference and we should take advantage of the chance. I encourage

everyone to attend the games and support our team.

Kimberly Crawford
Class of '97
Accompanied by 14 signatures

I have never enjoyed an article so much as the one Jamie Burch wrote for today's Battalion. The truth can be very refreshing! Although it is true that Texas A&M University is not just about sports...neither is it just about education.

My husband and I attend a majority of the Aggie sporting events—which are always a lot of fun and great family entertainment—and cannot understand why there aren't more people in attendance in a town of more than 100,000 residents plus 40,000 students. Although I am an adopted Aggie (graduate of UTA), my husband is Class of '75 and I have heard for may

years how G. Rollie White had standing room only for every game when he was in school—and A&M was not even half the size it is today. What has happened? I would also like to know where the Corps of Cadets' support is, as well as the fraternities, the sororities, those that support the football team, etc.

Regarding the yell leaders, I think that if one or two of them would be on the other side of the basketball court with the former students and older fans, they could get them to be more excited and to make a lot more noise. As for the band...why would they have to play just one kind of music...why not play some jazzy tunes and some traditional marches?

There is one thing I would like to add to the article, however, and that is the unfortunate fact that the lack of support is not only seen at the

men's basketball games, but at all Aggie sports—men and ladies! The football team and coaches are always talking about how important support is and yet I see very few players (or coaches!) at any other sporting events.

Sharon Lee
College Station

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