

OPINION

THE BATTALION

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HEFTY ISSUE RAISES DEBATE

Corps of Cadets' new weight requirement is a necessary addition to the program

Many campus organizations require participants to be a particular height, weight, gender or race, it is unquestionable that protests would be raised. However, if a sports team required a level of physical capability to participate, no questions would be asked. When it comes to the Corps of Cadets, however, a debate arises.



SARA FOLEY

It is undoubtedly a campus organization, but in the same instance, it is a physically demanding military organization. The ensuing question that is now apparent is which characteristic of the Corps dominates: the military, physical side or the fact that it is a student organization that anyone can join?

All branches of the U.S. Armed Forces have weight requirements in place — guidelines that dictate which candidates are fit for admission. However, the Corps of Cadets have never had a weight guideline or a weight management program. Until now.

On March 11, Commandant of the Corps Lt. Gen. John Van Alstyne issued a memorandum explaining a weight management program that will take effect in Fall 2003. While reactions have been mixed among cadets who do not fall within the weight guidelines and among non-regiment students who do not fully comprehend the reason and necessity for this measure, it is nevertheless an action that has needed to take place for some time.

Standards are needed in weight management for the Corps not only to assist the cadets in maintaining a healthy lifestyle, but to ensure that each member is physically able to maintain the energy level and physical performance requirements.

"We need to be moving on from the current level of physical training and we'll have to let go of those who are not able to keep up," said freshman, nuclear engineering major, cadet Justin Hatton of Company P-2.

Those cadets who do not comply with standards have most likely noticed the complications that may arise, such as difficulty participating in physical training exercises.

In addition to the energy level that is desired to be set at a standard level, physical appearance is important in sending the right message about cadets, said junior history major Paul Ramirez of Company E-1.

"Appearance plays a big part in the respect you receive and if your appearance says 'I'm fat and lazy,' no one will respect you," he said.

The program does not set unreasonable goals; they are derived from the most liberal allowances for heights among each military branch and a health insurance company, Van Alstyne said. By beginning the initiative with relatively loose standards, he has room to tighten up the standards later on, a possibility he said he will consider at a later time.

The mere belief that the standards now are "not strict enough," Ramirez said, indicates that the majority of the Corps supports this relatively meager initiative.

The program calls for those who do not fit the weight requirements (posted on cadets.tamu.edu) to participate in a three-part program that aims to change the individual's overall fitness level. A minimum loss of four pounds per month, as well as a remedial physical training program, described by Van Alstyne as a "defined program focused on weight reduction that is more aerobic," is required of those cadets in the program. In addition, nutrition analysis and counseling will be provided.

While this plan may seem strict or discriminatory, it is simply a means of ensuring that cadets can successfully participate in the organization. Physical fitness is a centerpiece of the Corps, and a cadet who holds others back deserves to be brought up to standards.

Standards, however, must somehow be implemented, and the enforcement of those requirements translates into dilemmas. Cadets in the program who fail to lose four pounds within the first two months or do not keep a consistent weight loss pattern will face dismissal from the Corps.

Junior Patrick Mireur of Company B-1 is on staff for the 3rd Battalion, which could possibly be in charge of enforcing the standards for that regiment. Mireur said he had "no mercy" for those who could not lose weight.

"You enter the Corps knowing it will be physically demanding and if you can't keep up, there's not a place for you," he said.

Van Alstyne admitted there would be cadets who choose not to lose the weight and are released from the Corps as a result, but said that was not the desired result.

For the Corps to operate effectively, it is logical and understandable to put these standards into place. Although the Corps is an open student organization, good health and the ability to participate in all activities is a central component. The program will not only relieve the Corps of those not willing to commit to health fitness, but will help those who desire to get into better shape.

Sara Foley is a sophomore journalism major. Graphic by Leigh Richardson.



A new Cuban crisis goes unnoticed by U.S.

Castro's actions must be addressed by the Bush administration and world

In the current tumultuous world environment, the United States has quite a few foreign policy wildfires to contain. Iraq, Israel, Afghanistan and North Korea are the big ones, but there are smaller ones that require the attention of the country as well. One of these is Castro's recent crackdown on dissidents in Cuba. In the past few weeks, 75 dissidents have been arrested, tried and sentenced for meeting with U.S. diplomats and thus collaborating to "undermine the communist government," according to an article in the Houston Chronicle. The United States needs to defend the rights of those who wish to meet with diplomats in other countries and join with other countries, especially in Latin America, in a show of solidarity against Castro's police state.



DAVID SHOEMAKER

First, the United States must protect the right of citizens in other countries to meet with official U.S. State Department personnel. The United States needs to take decisive action to protect the rights of its Foreign Service agents and those who wish to meet with them. The most recent problems with Castro's government began when U.S. Interests Section Chief James Cason began "assuming a higher profile in his support of the opposition," according to the Houston Chronicle. According to BBC.com, Cason agitated the communists by meeting more regularly with dissident elements, which made him the target of a "personal

vendetta" by the Castro government. Stung by his open support of opposition, the Cubans reacted violently, arresting and trying 75 people. According to the BBC, Cason's movements were being restricted by the Cubans, ostensibly in retaliation for similar restrictions placed on Cuban diplomats in the United States.

Among the options being considered include ending cash payments and all direct flights to the island from the United States, according to the International Herald Tribune. These sanctions are a good start, but now might be the time to take a page from Theodore Roosevelt's book — the philosophy of "talk quietly, but carry a big stick" — and apply some "gunboat diplomacy." Perhaps major military exercises or a passage of warships through the Florida straits will send the right message about the U.S. attitude about this matter. But other countries in the region, especially democratic ones, need to weigh in against Castro to let him know he is alone in his actions.

Other countries in the region need to express their displeasure with the Cuban regime. In the past, Latin America countries have supported the actions of Castro's Cuba, either because of the policies of their own totalitarian regimes or to counter American power in the region.

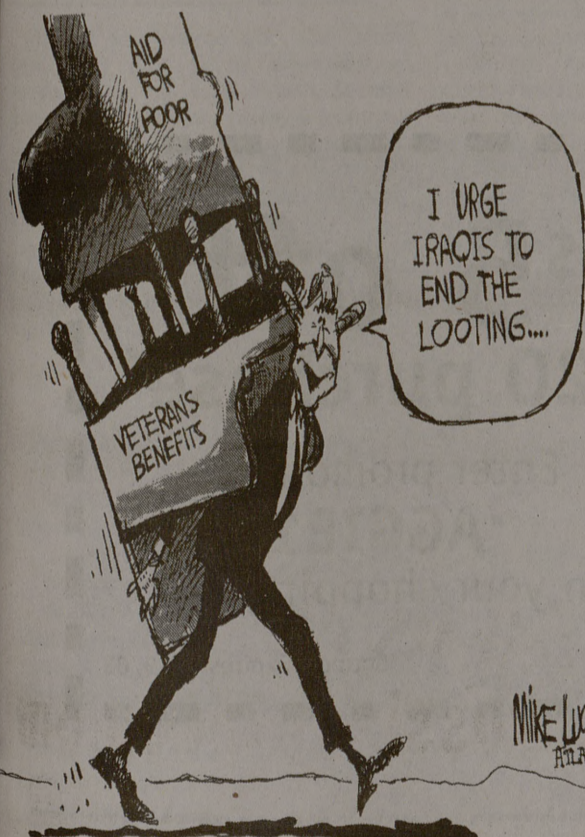
But now, many of these countries have changed their governments to democracies and the United States needs to make a final break with its Cold War policies in the area. Some countries have already come to realize the need to stand up for democracy in light of changes in their own countries. Mexico, for example, had

a policy of sticking by Cuba during the Cold War.

But now, according to an article in the Houston Chronicle, Mexico will vote in favor of a U.N. resolution asking Cuba to respect the human rights of its citizens. According to the article, Mexico was going to vote for the resolution because of its disappointment with the recent ferry hijacking and jailing of dissidents. Other countries need to follow Mexico's example and stand up to the police state in Cuba. The United States needs to make sure it does not leave countries that stand together on this issue politically exposed at home afterwards, either. If the United States wants to see more success for its Cuban policy, it needs the support of other Latin American countries.

The United States and other countries in the region need to show Castro that abusing his people has a price. The communists need to realize that now is not the time to pick a fight with the United States, especially now that Iraq has been liberated and North Korea has adopted a more conciliatory tone. If Cuba wishes to be the main course on our foreign policy plate, it may not like the kind of attention it will receive.

David Shoemaker is a junior business management major.



MAIL CALL

Armenian deaths were not genocide, but terrorism

In response to an April 25 U-Wire column:

I would like to highlight several facts that are unfortunately not mentioned in Chris Guzelian's article. Turks recognize the Armenian tragedy. However, the events that happened between 1915-1923 cannot be termed as genocide. In the First World War, a front was opened in the east where most Ottoman Armenians lived. Some Ottoman Armenians were focusing on carving up an independent state with Russian help.

The Armenian terrorist groups attacked the Turkish villages and killed many innocent people, mainly children and women because the men in the villages were fighting on different fronts as a part of the Ottoman Army, leaving their families behind.

In one recent documentary, a Turkish lady who witnessed these mass killings said everybody in her village including pregnant women, children and animals was killed. Our Armenian friends always quote the tragedy their grandparents endured, but don't acknowledge the terrorist attacks by the Armenian militia in

Turkish and Kurdish villages. The Ottoman government decided to transport the Armenian population in different parts of the empire until the war ended. Many Armenians unfortunately died.

The number of deaths is also controversial. The documentary proofs don't support any claim more than 300,000 Armenian casualties. I believe the Ottoman action against the Armenians cannot be termed as "genocide" because first, most of the Armenians who lived in other parts of the empire were not deported (i.e. in Istanbul). This proves that deportation was local and didn't aim at massacring people.

Second, genocide is used for one-sided acts. Armenians also caused local atrocities and many Turks and Kurds suffered.

Finally, there is no indication of anti-Armenian sentiment in Ottoman documents before these incidents. No clear proof of a "genocide order" has been found.

I believe the Armenian and Turkish people should remember the tragic incidents and give credit to their recollection of events and make research based on the documents. History shouldn't be merely written by the memories of our grandfathers and grandmothers.

Niyazi Onur Bakir Ph. D. Student

"Back-alley" abortions were not common

In response to an April 25 mail call:

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, this statistic is incorrect. Actually, only 39 women died from abortion-related injuries in the United States in 1972. Your entire argument is based on the fear that women will revert to "back-alley abortions," but according to a June 1960 article in The American Journal of Public Health, "90 percent of illegal abortions are being done by physicians."

The real question is how you value human life. If someone is considered dead when their heart stops, why should a child not be considered alive when his heart starts beating after only 28 days? In America we often debate abortion philosophically, but I challenge you to look at ultrasound pictures of a baby developing in a mother's womb. Then, after you hear that child's beating heart, reexamine your belief that that child could be killed out of convenience. That child has rights that should be protected as yours and mine are.

Kelley Norton Graduate Student