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## Letters to the Editor for Tuesday, April 4, 2006

Stars and Stripes

### European and Mideast editions

*(EDITOR'S NOTE: These are the letters that appeared in each edition of Stripes on this publication date. [Click here](#) to jump ahead to the Pacific edition letters)*

### Message of 'Combat Barbie'

Army Regulation 600-20 clearly states that the Army Equal Opportunity Program strives to "ensure fair treatment of all persons based solely on merit, fitness, and capability in support of readiness" (Para 6-1). It also states that the Army will provide "fair treatment of military personnel without regard to race, color, gender, religion. ..." (Para 6-2).

Yet, what message was conveyed in "['Combat Barbie' steps up to protect her unit](#)" (article, Stars and Stripes, March 27)?

Instead of highlighting a soldier's ability to operate a .50-caliber weapon and perform well under pressure, the first sentence of the article describes what the soldier looked like, and how unexpected it was for her to fire that weapon.

Man or woman, everyone is a soldier. I wonder how many times male soldiers who perform well under pressure make the front page of Stars and Stripes or get a full article and photo. She did her job and for that she deserves recognition, but to remark on her "warm smile" or hair and eye color is totally irrelevant to her abilities. Even if the soldier were awarded the "friendly" nickname "Combat Barbie," what warrants one to run that nickname on the cover of Stars and Stripes?

To the writer of the article, in case you haven't noticed, women have been serving in the armed forces under multitudes of jobs and proving their abilities for a while now. Last year, Sgt. Leigh Ann Hester was the first woman since World War II awarded a Silver Star for her actions (not her appearance) on a convoy ambush in Iraq. But thank you for setting females back again by reiterating that what we look like is more important than our ability to do our jobs.

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*First Lt. Lauren Koban  
Camp Stryker, Iraq*

## What Feingold is protecting

["Columnist's errors, mistruth"](#) (letter, March 25) would have been a decent response to what Jay Ambrose said ("Using left's logic, expelling Feingold also acceptable," Opinion, March 21) had it not been for this one line: "I am glad that some senators, like [Democratic Sen. Russ] Feingold, are protecting the home front and ensuring everyone, even the president, follows the law."

After I picked myself up from falling out of my chair laughing, I just had to write and ask if anyone really believes this garbage? I mean, the only thing Feingold is protecting is his liberal vote for the 2008 elections (being from Wisconsin I have seen personally how he has screwed things up). He realizes that Clinton has more share of the liberal vote than he does, so he has to invent new ways to get himself in the spotlight in hope of getting a few votes away from Clinton.

Up until just recently, I really thought the Democrats may have a chance of regaining the White House, but thanks to idiotic remarks such as those Hillary Clinton has been making in regard to illegal immigrants, and Feingold's censure agenda, I have nothing to worry about.

*Sgt. Nicholas Emmons  
Forward Operating Base Mahmudiyah, Iraq*

## Bad advice on lubrication

I just read "[Gun techs aim to keep troops clicking](#)" (article, Stars and Stripes, March 28), about the small-arms repair shop at Camp Anaconda, Iraq, and I am disturbed by what I saw.

I am an infantryman and an armorer stationed in Afghanistan and I can tell you that excessive lubricant in a desert environment is wrong. Too much lubricant on a weapon is exactly what attracts dust and dirt, especially in convoy and vehicle operations. This then causes jamming and malfunctions.

Excessive oil can also work its way into the primers and powder of ammunition in the weapon, rendering it useless.

The information you printed is incorrect and could potentially get someone killed. Cleaned properly, a weapon only requires a thin film of CLP or MILITEC left on it to ensure proper functioning. My individual weapon appears to have little or no lubricant on it, yet I have never had a problem with it firing in the last nine months.

I would ask that you please print a correction in the earliest edition possible and that you have your writers research their stories more in the future.

*Sgt. Robert Scarborough  
Camp Phoenix, Afghanistan*

## Constitution spells it out

I believe "[America's 'democracy,'](#)" (letter, March 30) proves the adage that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.

The letter writer prefaces his complaint by rightly reminding us that the U.S. is not a democracy, but a republic. While he is correct in citing the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, the concept of our republic is explicitly spelled out in our Constitution, Article IV, Section 4.

His complaint is against President Bush for not supporting democracy, citing the 2000 general election in which the popular vote was in favor of Al Gore, but the Electoral College was in favor of Bush. The Constitution outlines the method of electing the president, who is sworn to "preserve, protect and defend the Constitution" (found in Article II, Section 1), not majority rule (which is what democracy is, by definition).

While the buzz word "democracy" is tossed around during this war on terrorism, it would be absurd to believe that we would advocate mob rule.

Our republic allows us to elect officials to handle the matters of government for us. We elect them with the confidence that they speak for us, but we should not believe they should change policy based upon polls. Any leader who would do so is of weak character and not worthy of our confidence. Agree or disagree, one must admit that Bush has been consistent in his stance on the war on terror from its onset, which I must remind some, was thrust upon us and not of own choosing.

We have a method of influencing policy in our nation, and it is indeed a poll: the election poll. If one disagrees with the current administration, one should vote accordingly.

*Staff Sgt. Brian A. Heitman  
Ramadi, Iraq*

## **Support is solid despite 'polls'**

Because some so-called Christian "peace" activists condemn, rather than thank, their rescuers, please let me take this opportunity to thank you — especially those of you who rescued those ungrateful hypocrites who give the rest of us a bad name! You are marvelous. You are the best we have to offer and you offer us your very lives. I am humbled by your service and I only hope that my support and my spreading the news of what you are actually doing can bring you some comfort.

My son is one of you and is in the desert, too. He has told us some of what he is doing and, believe me, I tell it as a witness — not as something I heard on the "news."

And I want you to know this: Everywhere I go and I mention that my son is in the Army, people say "please tell him we thank him for his service" or "God bless him" or "we're praying for all of them." Never — *never* — has anyone told me they oppose what you are doing. It's all positive.

People want to know what they can do to help. What can they send?

So, folks, forget those "polls" you keep hearing about. The vast number of Americans — that silent majority — is behind you 1,000 percent! I know I am.

So, thank you. Thank you for your courage and your commitment to service. Thank you for your compassion in helping those who are not gracious enough to thank you themselves. Thank you for risking your lives — for me and for each other. May God bless and keep you and bring you home to the loving arms of your families and a very grateful nation.

*Becky Howard  
Rocky Point, N.C.*

## **Pacific edition**

### **UCMJ helps ensure loyalty**

Letters referencing the Uniform Code of Military Justice and political protest remind me of 1996 and 2000. I wonder where these self-righteous enforcers stood then.

I recall entering my work center at a joint service unit in 1996 to find an Army noncommissioned officer lecturing my troops to the effect that, if the election did not kick President Clinton out, he and a half million other soldiers knew how to "finish the job." He was surprised to find that an Air Force senior NCO knew how to "lock heels." The most disturbing part was that his command dismissed it, saying that it didn't see any harm in his attitude.

I also remember talking with my division chief in late 2000 who stated to me and others that he was afraid of only one thing in that election: that George W. Bush would win the popular vote but not the Electoral College. He said if that happened, he expected the military to "step in" and set things right. He reacted with indignation when I informed him that such talk was treason and he questioned my loyalties. Not surprisingly, he did not advocate armed insurrection when what he feared *did* happen, only not to the guy he was supporting.

If criticizing the administration is wrong now, how many were guilty of doing it during Clinton's administration?

The reason for UCMJ directives regarding political activities is to ensure loyalty is maintained to the mission. It shouldn't matter which party is in charge. The prerequisites of the mission are independent of individual political affiliation.

By the same token, the activities of military personnel should never cast into doubt their ability to follow the directives of the commander in chief, to either the public or their fellow comrades in arms.

*Michael Williams  
Baghdad*

### **Salute and enjoy ice cream**

In response to "[Garrison or combat zone?](#)" (letter, March 28), the writer is absolutely right. Regulations do exist for a reason, they are

meant to keep law, order and discipline. Some would argue that something small, such as saluting, is no big deal. I say that discipline starts with the small things.

We all know that discipline demonstrated is doing the right thing when no one is looking. I do agree that some of the things I've seen while deployed are funny (i.e. pressed and creased desert combat uniforms); but to lighten up on standards is not.

To every noncommissioned officer out there, I say: The standard is only as old as the last time you enforced it. That is one of our charges as noncommissioned officers, and to not enforce a standard would be demonstrating a lack of discipline.

It's my opinion that if the standards (small ones and big) at Abu Ghraib prison had been enforced, there probably would not have been such a callous disregard for the rules and regulations.

The tactical situation should always be considered when making decisions, and alcohol and live ammo do not mix in any environment. Also, the rumor that saluting will give you tennis elbow and prevent you from enjoying your second helping of Baskin-Robbins is a wives' tale.

*Sgt. Maj. Waldemar Estrella  
Camp Taji, Iraq*

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