

Navy fliers had "zero-tolerance" for women

When the United States sent its military forces into the Middle East, it was seen as an opportunity to finally dispel the popular notion that the armed forces are comprised of mindless, gun-toting apes, but rather highly skilled and trained professional soldiers. Twenty years of Vietnam memories and Rambo movies had done little to improve public perception of the military, and they needed to prove that they really were as cool as Tom Cruise in *Top Gun*.

And it might have worked, had it not been for the tragedy that occurred at the now infamous Tailhook Association's convention in Las Vegas last year. After the convention, unconfirmed rumors began surfacing suggesting a very ugly incident involving the abuse of several women guests.

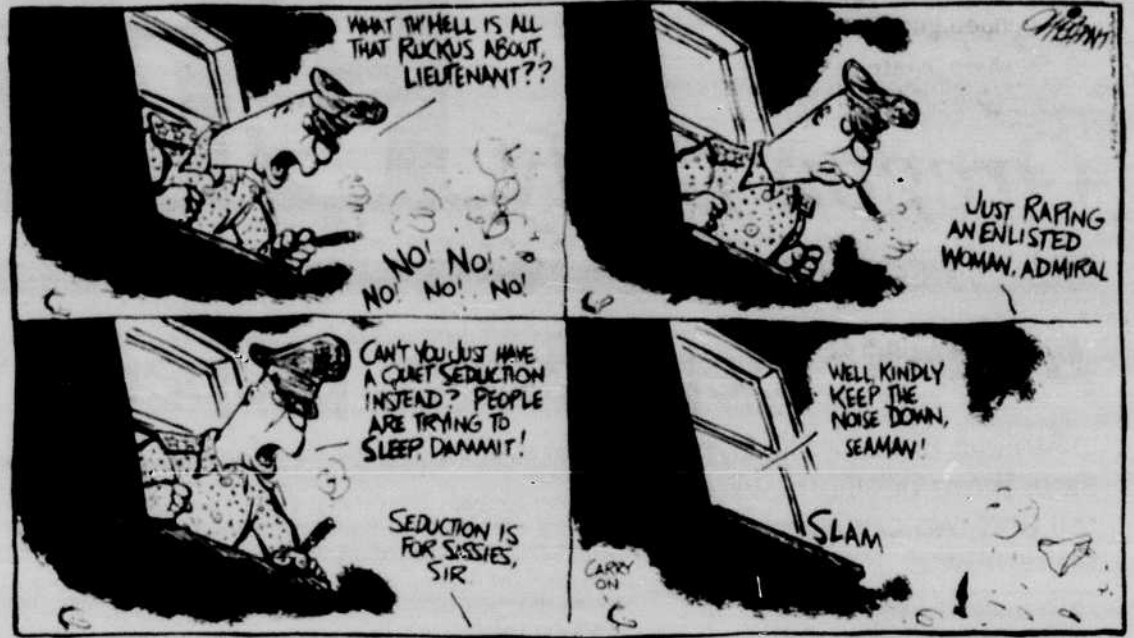
Those rumors were confirmed recently by Navy Lt. Paula Coughlin, who reported being passed down a gauntlet of fellow officers (all male) who proceeded to sexually abuse her, both physically and verbally, along with 25 other women, 13 of whom were also naval officers.

Supposedly, the Navy has a "zero-tolerance" policy for dealing with sexual harassment. Those found guilty are to be automatically discharged. This policy presumes that senior officers will act upon complaints in a fair and timely manner. Lt. Coughlin's boss simply told her that she shouldn't have been there, and what did she expect, being around a bunch of drunken sailors?

Zero-tolerance needs to be just that, not a paper-only policy designed to quell demands of equal treatment for women. The military conducts training courses to make the sexes aware of their rights and responsibilities when interacting with each other. Unfortunately, these classes fail to address the real issues. While they drive home the penalties for harassment and attempt to specify what is and is not acceptable conduct, they fail to discuss why harassment is wrong. Women are not portrayed as colleagues to be respected, but rather as dangerous and threatening creatures around whom men must be cautious of everything they do and say.

Such portrayals of women only reinforce the belief that women are hampering the ability of men to perform their job, which creates an atmosphere that allows incidents like the Tailhook convention to occur.

The Navy should respond to this crisis with an iron fist. Unless the guilty parties come forward, all officers in attendance that night should be discharged — involved or not. The short-term damage this would do the Navy would be greatly outweighed by the long-term benefits of the clear message it would send.



COMMENTARY

New energy sources create jobs

By Scott Sklar

New jobs in clean energy can transform the Rust Belt into a new labor-intensive set of industries. A study recently released by the natural gas, solar and renewable energy efficiency industry associations says that a minimum of 99,900 jobs can be created within this decade, even under conservative predictions, with a net decline of 24,400 coal jobs. The study predicts that the proportion of our energy consumption from renewable energy sources — solar, wind, geothermal and biomass — will double by 2010, pollutant emissions will decrease significantly, and hundreds of thousands of jobs will be created. A similar study, released by the EPA in March, predicts a quadrupling of solar energy's contribution to the nation's energy mix within the same time period merely by providing enhanced federal R&D, financing and tax incentives similar to those currently provided to the conventional energy industries.

These studies debunk the jobs versus environment argument by finding that increased investment in clean, domestic energy resources actually creates jobs and spurs economic growth. The "Alternative Energy Future" scenario projects that by 2010 we could easily see a 12 percent decrease in carbon dioxide emissions, the primary "greenhouse gas" causing global warming.

The United States must position itself for the technologies of the future, not of the past. We must take advantage of our technological lead in the development of solar and renewable energy so as to not repeat the "VCR syndrome" where we lose hundreds of millions of

dollars in profits and hundreds of thousands of jobs to out international competitors on technologies we created. Moreover, the American public should not tolerate the continued drain of hundreds of millions of dollars for imported oil.

According to the Worldwatch institute, "Residential weatherization — including such measures as caulking and weather-stripping, ceiling and floor insulation, installation of storm windows and doors, and duct installation — is a particularly labor-intensive process." A study by the University of Alaska found that state spending on weatherization creates more jobs per dollar of outlays than any other type of capital project — almost three times as many direct jobs as highway construction, for example.

The Institute also reported on a study prepared by the Great Lakes Governors to determine the economic effects of increasing the use of biomass energy. In 1985, more than 32,000 people in the Great Lakes states were employed in jobs directly or indirectly associated with this energy source. Increasing the use of biomass by 50 percent between 1985-1995 would have generated 50,900 new jobs in operations and maintenance, 17,500 in manufacturing and construction of new plants and equipment, and 7,900 through the respending of savings. Taking into account the jobs lost by displacement of fossil fuels, the net gain is still 41,100 by 1995. The bulk of the new employment gains would be in agriculture, fabricated metal products, and wholesale and retail trade.

The United States must implement policies which promote energy efficiency and clean uses of domestic energy.

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Most of the decision will be made at the local level. State utility commissions will determine the regulatory processes.

State and local environmental boards will face hard choices to offset pollution. Hopefully, they will consider prevention through the use of solar and renewable energy rather than bandages such as scrubbers and pollution allowances.

Solar water heating and solar industrial process heating is already a cost-effective application being utilized in over 1.5 million buildings. Photovoltaic is used as a cost-effective application by utility, industrial/agricultural and communications industries for remote power, line voltage augmentation, irrigation, water pumping, lighting and cathodic protection respectively.

If we as a nation do not begin to make the hard choices, we will be relinquishing our economic growth and our access to stable and affordable energy. The question is: Can we take some of the economic tools afforded to us by federal and state programs and orient them to a new approach to economic development?

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