

OPINION

How Obama-era social engineering transformed the military

by [James Hasson](#)

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In 2016, Anthony Kurta, the deputy assistant secretary of defense for military personnel policy, announced, “There will be mixed genitalia in military bathrooms, showers, and billeting.” On a conference call with Army Colonel Ron Crews and others, Kurta explained that the new policy allowing transgender soldiers to serve according to their “gender identities” rather than their biological sex meant that a person whose gender identity and biological sex did not match would be allowed to use the barracks of the opposite sex. It also meant that transgender soldiers would be evaluated not according to the physical standards appropriate for their own sex but according to the standards for the opposite sex.

In practice, then, biologically male soldiers who “identified” as female would be treated as if they had the bodies of young women and, for instance, be allowed to pass Army fitness tests at a lower level or pass body composition standards designed for a member of the opposite sex. In an institution that is concerned exclusively with physical realities and physical outcomes, that is no small thing.

Crews, a former chaplain, was concerned about the privacy of female soldiers under the new policy and the effect it might have on recruiting and retention:

Crews: A larger proportion [of the force] comes from the Southeast U.S. than from any other region of the country — the so-called Bible Belt. ... Don’t you think that moms and dads will have some second thoughts about encouraging particularly their daughters to join a military where their daughters may be exposed? If we have an 18-year-old female coming from an evangelical Christian home, and she’s in a two-person billet [and receives a transgender roommate who is biologically male], this young lady will have no recourse, correct? If she complains, she’s the one in the wrong — is that correct?

Kurta: That’s correct.

Crews: Don’t you think that’s going to raise concerns for recruiting?

Kurta: I believe Americans will be proud that our military is leading the way in this social transformation.

A Marine chaplain with a decade and a half of service had a nearly-identical, albeit slightly more personal experience with Kurta. After Kurta made similar statements in a meeting with a collection of chaplains at the Pentagon, this particular chaplain approached him and asked if he was serious. He said Kurta “looked me right in the eye and said, ‘Hey look, there will be mixed-genitalia in our berthing areas, in our barracks, and it’s good for America.’” The chaplain cut to what should have been the heart of the issue, asking Kurta, “Wow sir, do you really believe that? This is going to make us better at warfighting?”

Kurta simply replied, “Well, that’s just the way it is.”

Kurta’s separate interactions with those two chaplains perfectly capture the chasm that separated the Obama administration’s priorities from those of the senior military leaders in the Pentagon.

Kurta, by the way, was one of the few appointees in the Obama DoD to stay in the Pentagon after the Trump administration took over. He served as the acting under secretary of defense for personnel and readiness — essentially a promotion from the position he held during the exchanges described above — for most of 2017. Kurta was also tapped to be the principal deputy undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, something that multiple sources who served under him during the Obama era called surprising and concerning. His nomination stalled in the Senate, however, and was ultimately withdrawn in September 2018.

In early 2016, retired Marine General James Mattis co-edited a book titled *Warriors and Citizens: American Views of Our Military* about the risks and consequences of the civil-military divide in America, amidst our long-running wars from which much of the public and the media have long since disengaged. Hailed as a mission-focused warrior undistracted by political considerations, the future secretary of defense expressed his concern that “an uninformed public is permitting political leaders to impose an accretion of social conventions that are diminishing the combat power of our military, disregarding our warfighting practitioners’ advice.” Mattis observed: “There remains an underlying deference by the public to allow the military to operate by its own rules, an interesting factor since our political leadership has not advocated for such a difference. In recent years political leaders have instead often used the military as a vehicle to lead social change in the broader society.”

Like other flashpoints in the culture wars, a very vocal minority is the driving force behind political leaders' efforts to use the military as a tool for social change. Because politicians are "naturally responsive to activism, we could be moving toward a military that is more responsive to the values of the 5 percent of very liberal Americans than those of the vast majority of our fellow citizens, liberal and conservative," Mattis warned. Allowing these ideologues to set military policy would "force the military to sacrifice practices it perpetuates not for reasons of social conservatism but for reasons of military practicality and battlefield success."

President Obama apparently did not welcome General Mattis's opinions. As CENTCOM commander, Mattis had forcefully advocated a more muscular approach to Iran when the administration was seeking a nuclear deal at all costs. In January 2013, the renowned general was fired without the courtesy of a phone call. A report by the House Intelligence Committee later concluded that removing Mattis, whose vaunted military career spanned four decades of impressive service, had itself reduced CENTCOM's effectiveness.

The unabashed political activism of Obama's service secretaries after the transition to the Trump administration confirms Mattis's assessment of their motives. Four days after President Trump announced that he would reverse Obama's ill-conceived transgender policy, Obama administration appointee Eric Fanning appeared in a Human Rights Campaign video promising to "fight" the Trump administration.

Fanning, Mabus, and James all participated in lawsuits filed to block the current commander in chief's reversal of the former commander in chief's policy. (Of course, Obama had himself reversed the transgender policies of his predecessors). This political maneuvering appeared to mark the first time in American history that former service secretaries had resorted to the courts to force the current commander in chief, by order of a single federal district judge, to implement their preferred policies instead of his own. The court did not disappoint them, citing many of their arguments in its unprecedented nationwide injunction blocking the commander in chief's military policies. An Army general who served under the Obama administration was astonished that the courts would substitute "their judgment for who should be in the military and who should not" over that of the commander in chief, as if the military were "like a bank" or another standard employer.

The former service secretaries have not confined their partisan sniping to the courts. Fanning has retweeted posts calling Trump a "traitor" guilty of "high crimes and misdemeanors" and telling him to resign. He has frequently tweeted

about the Trump administration using the hashtag #DrainTheWhiteHouse.

Mabus, for his part, has retweeted posts promoting the anti-Trump website PutinsPuppet.net. Six weeks after Trump took office, Mabus attacked the new president for the supposedly wasteful way in which the new aircraft carrier Gerald Ford was built. “They were designing the Ford while they were building it—[that is] not a good way to build a ship,” he wrote. Doubling down, he added, “This is just a dumb way to build any type of ship, particularly something as big and complicated as a carrier.”

The flaw in Mabus’s criticism was that the Ford was built almost entirely during his own tenure and according to his own decisions. One is hard-pressed to decide which is worse, Mabus’s partisanship or his ignorance.

The above is a lightly edited excerpt from James Hasson's new book Stand Down: How Social Justice Warriors Are Sabotaging America's Military.

Hasson is a former Army captain and a decorated Afghanistan veteran.

From the Amazon listing you will see this comment:

"Finally, a book that details the Obama era PC madness that continues to destroy our military like a stage 4 cancer. From safe spaces at Annapolis to wars on carbon emissions to transgender grunts, Mr. Hasson's book is an eye opener for the American people on the current state of the armed forces. Sadly, a military mindset that sought in 2016, to "balance lactation support with readiness," lingers today, even under the Trump administration. Be in no doubt - the social justice warriors are in charge of your military, now, in 2019! And, that perhaps is the biggest message of the book itself: President Trump must act to reverse the PC insanity before a total disaster ensues for US forces in a future conflict against the Russians, the Chinese or the North Koreans. The Hour of the Cluster is nearing for the US military. Is anyone in DC listening? Does anyone at the Pentagon care? As Churchill said on the night he was made Prime Minister, "Pray, God, we are not too late."
Garryowen! Seventh First!"