

[Home](#) » [National](#) » Article

Racism, abuse: army training in time warp

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Page 1 of 2 | [Single page](#)

ASIAN officer cadets were singled out to play the enemy in a classroom war lesson, reservists were called dogs and female recruits were harassed when they complained they were unable to carry loads of more than half their body weight, an internal army survey has revealed.

The descriptions of bastardisation at Duntroon, the Royal Military College in Canberra, came to light only when cadets were asked to assess their officer training course in an anonymous online evaluation.

Their responses so horrified the warrant officer who reviewed them that he informed senior officers at the college, who ordered an investigation.

In one instance, an instructor, of sergeant rank singled out two cadets of Chinese descent to play the role of the enemy Koreans in a theory lesson on the 1951 battle of Maryang San. A number of cadets complained about what they said was the sergeant's offensive behaviour. He told investigators he was "not aware that he had offended anybody" and he had thought his choice of the two Asian cadets to play the enemy was humorous.

One cadet said he felt "ashamed to be in the same room as this man". Another said "racial stereotyping is not funny and is beneath the dignity of a senior non-commissioned officer".

The sergeant, who said he was a qualified equity adviser, was counselled and apologised.

The records of interview, seen by the *Herald*, give a rare insight into an antiquated culture inside Defence's training establishments, which commanders have been unable to stamp out. It adds to a personnel crisis so serious that the Federal Government announced in December that it was spending \$1 billion on new recruitment and retention measures.

The officer cadets - all reservists, some of whom had given up holidays, taken leave without pay or given up jobs to attend the course - said they were treated like "second-class citizens", with contempt, and were belittled by the instructors and staff who were all from the regular army.

Among the complaints, a captain told officer cadets to "put your wanking wrench in the air" to indicate they should put up their hands if they had a question.

Another instructor told a joke which, said a female officer cadet, was "structured like a fairytale which told of a man having to choose between a beautiful woman and an ugly witch. The punchline was words to the effect of 'just remember that, deep down, all women are witches'."

One female officer cadet said it was difficult for the women to go to the toilet because of the reaction it provoked from the males, who "simply go to the nearest tree and think it is funny when everyone is watching".

Source: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/racism-abuse-army-training-in-time-warp/2007/03/03/1172338895385.html>