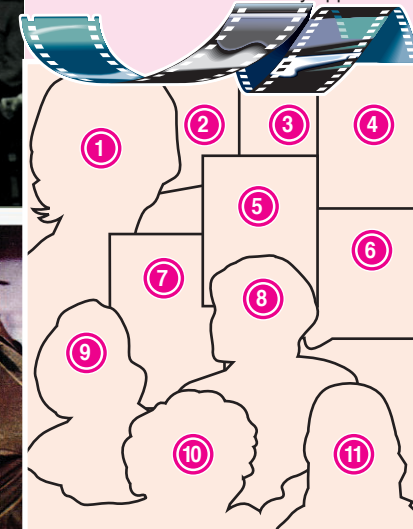


GLAMORISING WOMEN at war, in the movies in particular, has always been treated delicately, but in the new 20th Century Fox movie, *Courage under Fire*, directed by Edward Zwick, Meg Ryan brings the powerful dramatic role for a woman right to the forefront.

Picture 1 shows Meg Ryan as Capt. Karen Walden in *Courage under Fire*, but who are the other women in uniform and in which movies did they appear?



- 1 Meg Ryan – *Courage under Fire* (1996)
- 2 Brigitte Bardot – *Babette Goes to War* (1959)
- 3 Cary Grant – *I was a Male War Bride* (1949)
- 4 Judy Garland – *Me and My Gal* (1942)
- 5 Demi Moore – *A Few Good Men* (1992)
- 6 Kim Hunter – *Matter of Life and Death* (1946)
- 7 Ingrid Bergman – *Joan of Arc* (1948)
- 8 Susannah York – *Battle of Britain* (1969)
- 9 Kelly McGillis – *Top Gun* (1986)
- 10 Bette Midler – *For the Boys* (1991)
- 11 Goldie Hawn – *Private Benjamin* (1980)

*Courage under Fire* opens with a 'friendly fire' incident during the 1991 Gulf War in which Lt Colonel Nathaniel Serling, played by Denzel Washington, unwittingly orders the destruction of one of his own tanks, killing the crew. He is relieved of his command and sent back to Washington to take on a desk job, where one of his first duties is to review the case of a Medevac helicopter pilot, Capt. Karen Walden (Meg Ryan), killed in action in the battle zone, and the first woman to be nominated for a Medal of Honor for combat.

It appears a simple enough task and the White House, sensing a good media opportunity, is pressurising for the nomination to be approved, but eyewitness accounts of the incident from Walden's crew conflict wildly. The story is seen in flashback through the eyes of her crew, and from the outset, it is unclear which interpretation of Capt. Walden presented is the real one. Each storyline is equally believable, while the film's opening sequence, portraying Serling's tragic mistake, demonstrates convincingly the confusion of events on the battlefield and how differently they are perceived by everyone involved