

RESPONSE TO IT'S TIME TO SCRAP DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL

(See Lt. C. Randolph Whipps, p10; December Proceedings)

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Lt. Randolph Whipps declares that it is time to repeal "Don't Ask Don't Tell" (DADT). He says our Navy's discrimination on the basis of sexual preference shares the same admission standards as a Wahabbist madrasa and that we should adopt an Ivy League mindset basing acceptance for service on performance and potential.

To begin with, let's clarify what DADT is and is not. The law stating the eligibility criteria for military service is set forth in the 1993 Eligibility Law, Title 10, Section 654 of the U.S. Code. This law was passed by a large majority, bipartisan Congressional vote after a blue ribbon committee studied the issue of gays serving in the military. This study was in response to President Clinton's attempt to introduce legislation demanded by the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community as payback for their support to his presidential campaign. The 1993 Eligibility Law passed by Congress did not support the LGBT agenda; so, to keep peace with the LGBT community Clinton had his Secretary of Defense issue the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy statement. The 1993 Eligibility Law is a law. Don't Ask, Don't Tell is not a law; it is a policy statement issued as a compromise.

The legal framework defining eligibility to serve is defined in the US Code, Title 10 - Armed Forces, Section 654 - Policy concerning homosexuality in the armed forces. It states that nobody has a constitutional right to serve in the military because the military has a special purpose in our society, i.e. to prepare for and prevail in combat for the purpose of national security. This makes it a fundamentally different society from civilian life. Success in combat depends upon military units with high morale, good order and discipline, and unit cohesion, where unit cohesion is one of the most critical elements in combat capability. Such unit cohesion is the bond of trust among individual service members that makes the unit's combat effectiveness greater than the sum of the combat effectiveness of the individual members. The extraordinary responsibilities of the military unit and the unique conditions of the military community require that it exist as a special community with its own laws, rules, customs, and traditions, including numerous restrictions on personal behavior that would not be acceptable in civilian society. The prohibition against homosexual behavior is a longstanding element of military life that continues to be necessary in the unique circumstances of military service.

In the argument about whether or not to repeal The 1993 Eligibility Law, here are some things to consider:

First, this is not a matter of discrimination or about fairness. It is a matter of the combat effectiveness. If the argument is framed as an equal rights issue and not about combat effectiveness, the true nature of this important subject will be hidden under a barrage of political correctness, hyperbole and demagoguery. The public will be misinformed and misled into legislation that serves a gay rights agenda while damaging military effectiveness.

Second, over 1,100 flag and general officers recently signed an open letter to President Obama and Congress urging that they do not repeal or modify the intent of the 1993 Eligibility Law. They state

that repeal of the Eligibility Law is a bad idea that would not enhance military readiness, and would prompt many to leave military service. This is based on 4 years of polling in The Military Times that found 58% of service members oppose repeal of the Eligibility Law, 10% would not reenlist if it is repealed, and 14% would consider leaving. At its minimum effect, 228,000 would leave active duty, the reserve, and National Guard. That is more than today's active duty Marine Corps! These losses would adversely affect our officer corps and senior enlisted personnel when we are trying to expand the Army and Marine Corps. These senior military leaders assert that it would be crippling to our All Volunteer Force.

Third, if openly gay people serve in the military, they will be accorded special status with rules and regulations regarding their treatment. These new strictures will require a sensitivity training program that will compete with and erode time for professional training. The demanding rules defining proper behavior to ensure that homosexuals won't feel threatened or offended will bring frequent infractions, real and imagined, leading to a heavier command disciplinary burden. Resentment in the ranks will follow to compound the daunting difficulties of integrating gays into the military organization. Unit cohesion will suffer.

Fourth, gays and lesbians have a lifestyle that won't fit into the military. It is out of synch with military values, and what the country expects of its military. The gay lifestyle won't play in a Marine rifle platoon, a fighter squadron, or shipboard in the crews' mess. Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines are a macho bunch. Gays are held in low esteem with many derisive terms used to refer to them. A gay officer would likely find it impossible to win the respect of his troops or sailors ... and respect is the coin of the realm in leadership.

The federal government may pass laws demanding that gays be admitted to the armed forces, but this won't change attitudes. The assimilation of gays into the military will be painful and destructive to unit cohesiveness and force effectiveness.

Fifth, gay and lesbian activists aren't interested in military service *per se*; their objective is to get broad social acceptance of deviant lifestyles. They aren't motivated to join the military for service to country; they want to use it as a precedent to change our social consciousness to accept homosexual values and the gay lifestyle as just another part of the mainstream of American life. *Gays in the military* is the linchpin issue that would cause all other issues to fall in line, including dozens of state referenda upholding the definition of marriage. LGBT activists want government power to impose their agenda on all institutions of American life.

Lt. Whipps bemoans that our Navy with its acceptance policies is more like a Wahabbi madrasa than an Ivy League school, but the Navy's culture and tradition have evolved over the centuries to make it a premier fighting force. You can't run it like an Ivy League school. It is not an equal opportunity program, it's not a laboratory for social engineering, it does not belong to any political party to be used for paying campaign IOUs, and military service in it is not for everyone.