

# CSSMM CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SEXUAL MINORITIES IN THE MILITARY

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA

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## NEW STUDY FINDS THAT OPEN GAYS AND LESBIANS DO NOT UNDERMINE COHESION IN ISRAEL

A new study sponsored by the Center has found that the inclusion of homosexuals in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has not harmed operational effectiveness, combat readiness, unit cohesion, or morale. The Israeli military maintains a universal conscription policy and has never officially prohibited the inclusion of sexual minorities. Before the 1980s, however, an admission of homosexuality would likely be met with dismissal of the gay or lesbian soldier. From 1983 to 1993, the Israeli military officially approved the inclusion of sexual minorities, but it did implement some restrictions on their placement. In 1993 these restrictions were officially abolished.

Up until the past decade, the vast majority of gay and lesbian soldiers kept their sexual orientation private due to fears of both official sanctions and ostracism from fellow soldiers. As more homosexuals have grown comfortable about expressing their orientation, greater openness and tolerance has been found in the military as well. All available evidence suggests that even prior to

the lifting of restrictions in 1993, the IDF ban on homosexual service in sensitive positions was never fully implemented. Some openly gay soldiers were also allowed to serve in combat units and as officers.

Information collected for this report was systematically gathered from 223 news articles and wire service dispatches relating to homosexual service in the IDF, analysis of 14 Israeli web sites related to gay and lesbian issues, interviews with 15 major academic, non-governmental, and policy observers familiar with gay-military issues in Israel or IDF concerns generally, and interviews with 12 present and former sexual minority participants in the IDF. The report is available on the Center's web site at [www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu](http://www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu).

## MILITARY SOCIOLOGIST ADDRESSES UCSB WORKSHOP

**Laura Miller**, Assistant Professor of Sociology at University of California, Los Angeles, came to Santa Barbara on April 21 to address a *Workshop on Gender and Sexuality in a Global Context*. Miller, whose topic was *Are Open Gays a Threat to Cohesion?*, earned her Ph.D. at Northwestern University. Other speakers at the Workshop included **Professor J. Ann Tickner** of the School of International Relations at USC and **Professor Jane S. De Hart** of UCSB's History Department.

In her presentation, Miller described survey data she has collected over the past ten years based on interviews with thousands of American soldiers. Her conclusion is that although straight soldiers' reactions to open gays could undermine unit cohesion, merely lifting the gay ban would not undermine cohesion, morale, or readiness because few gays or lesbians would come out in units where hostility and homophobia are prevalent.

Although Miller is a junior scholar, she has quickly become a distinguished military sociologist and her work has been cited widely in the *New York Times* and elsewhere. She studies gender relations in the military, especially as they vary by race, rank, and occupational specialty, and her current research explores the interactions of soldiers, journalists, relief workers and local populations in peacekeeping operations. Included in her long list of publications is *Fighting for a Just Cause: Soldiers' Attitudes on Gays in the Military*.



Laura Miller, Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Los Angeles, addresses a UCSB audience on April 21.

## COMMONWEALTH CLUB AND CSSMM TO SPONSOR CONFERENCE ON GAY BAN

The **Commonwealth Club of California** and the Center are co-sponsoring a conference during Fall, 2000 on gays and lesbians in the military. Specifically, the conference will focus on the relationship between the American gay ban and the experiences of foreign militaries in which gays and lesbians serve openly without undermining cohesion and discipline. The conference, which will be publicized widely to national media outlets, will consist of a day of presentations on the Israeli, Canadian, British, and other foreign militaries. Each presentation will include the latest academic evidence as well as testimonials from combat soldiers and senior military and ministry officials. The conference is being sponsored by a generous \$25,000 grant from **James G. Follis** and **Willard Ray Hurst**.

## WEB SITE ON SEXUALITY AND THE MILITARY

Visit the Center's web page at:

[WWW.GAYMILITARY.UCSB.EDU](http://WWW.GAYMILITARY.UCSB.EDU)

Improvements and additions to the site will be forthcoming throughout the year. Designed by Stanford Ph.D. Jeff Cerie, the web page includes information on the CSSMM as well as resources for scholars and veterans.

## CORRECTION

The affiliation of **Joseph R. Hawkins**, a recipient of a Center fellowship for his work on homosexuality in Japan, was listed incorrectly in the last issue of the newsletter. Hawkins is Visiting Professor in Anthropology at the University of Akron.

## CENTER OFFERS FELLOWSHIP FOR RESEARCH ON ISRAELI DEFENSE FORCES

The Center has awarded a fellowship to **Danny Kaplan**, a Ph.D. candidate in Psychology at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel. Kaplan, who specializes in military organizational culture, has conducted research on the experiences of gay men in combat units in the Israeli army. His book on this topic, ***David, Jonathan and Other Soldiers: Masculinity and Sexuality in Combat Units of the Israeli Army*** (1999, Ha-Kibbutz Ha Meuchad Press), consists of interviews with men from a range of combat units and an analysis of their identification with the military. Kaplan will use the Center fellowship to help finance the translation of his book into English. Other scholars interested in Center fellowships can apply on-line in the "Research Resources" section of the Center's web page: [www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu](http://www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu). There is no deadline for this competition and applications are accepted throughout the year.

## DEVELOPMENT NEWS (WINTER, 2000)

The Center is very grateful to **James G. Follis** and **Willard Ray Hurst** for their gift of \$25,000. The gift will be used to sponsor a conference with the **Commonwealth Club of California** on the experience of gays and lesbians in foreign militaries. The Center is very grateful for the support of the **Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund** for its grant of \$7,500; and of **Colonel Margarethe Cammermeyer USAR (ret.), Ph.D., RN**, who provided a gift of \$2,000.

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**Leisa D. Meyer**, Assistant Professor of History at the College of William and Mary, addresses UCSB students and faculty on February 16. The topic of her presentation was *Gays in the Military: The Practical Implications of the Absence of Lesbians from the Debate*.

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