

CSSMM CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SEXUAL MINORITIES IN THE MILITARY

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1

FALL 2001

NEW STUDY FINDS FOREIGN EXPERIENCES WITH GAY TROOPS RELEVANT TO U.S.

A new CSSMM study published in September argues that foreign military experiences are relevant for determining what would happen if the U.S. Congress rescinded the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy. Titled "Homosexuality and the Israel Defense Forces: Did Lifting the Gay Ban Undermine Military Performance," the study appeared in *Armed Forces and Society*, a scholarly journal and official publication of the Inter-University Seminar, an academic network of military sociologists.

None of the twenty-three nations that permit gay soldiers to serve openly has reported problems. But experts who oppose lifting the American gay ban offer several reasons why foreign military experiences are irrelevant for the U.S. were it to allow gays to serve openly in its military. The study uses data from Israel to assess these arguments.

First, opponents of gays and lesbians serving in the U.S. military argue that even where legal, few gays actually come out of the closet in combat units in overseas militaries, making it difficult to predict the impact on the U.S. military if gay and lesbian service members were to suddenly come out. But the study shows that gays and lesbians do serve openly in combat units in the Israel Defense Forces. A survey of 136 Israeli combat soldiers found that seventeen percent know a homosexual peer in their unit.

CENTER MISREPRESENTS TWO SCHOLARS

In its Spring 2001 newsletter and in a subsequent press release, the Center misrepresented the views of two key military scholars whose criticism of policies that allow gays and lesbians to serve openly has shifted. Professor Christopher Dandeker, Head of the Department of War Studies and Professor of Military Sociology at Kings College London, still harbors reservations about how far open integration in Britain can go. Dandeker says that there have been few problems since Britain lifted its ban in January, 2000, but he reserves his final judgment until more time has elapsed and worries that integration may still pose long-term problems. Dandeker also questions the ability of the U.S. military to use effectively the British case as a model for its operations. As well, Professor Peter Feaver of Duke University believes that ongoing changes in societal attitudes may be reducing somewhat the long-term costs of lifting the ban. The short-run costs, he believes, remain fairly high, perhaps prohibitively high when there are other higher priority tasks on the military agenda.

Based on interviews with thirty-five academic and official experts, as well a review of 259 government documents and newspaper articles, the study found no evidence that open gays have undermined Israeli military performance or cohesion.

Opponents also claim that foreign militaries' experiences are irrelevant in this case, because gays and lesbians receive special treatment in overseas militaries. The study concluded that despite the lack of perfectly equal treatment in all cases, most Israeli gay and lesbian soldiers are treated the same as their heterosexual peers most of the time. It also found no evidence that rare cases of differential treatment undermined performance, cohesion, or morale.

Finally, opponents of gays in the military argue that the uniqueness of U.S. culture makes all comparisons to other countries' experiences useless. But the study argues that all national cultures are unique. Given that 23 countries have lifted their gay bans successfully, cultural differences do not seem to matter.

MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE CENTER'S WORK

Over the past several months, journalists around the country have covered the Center's research. In June, CSSMM board member Lawrence Korb published an op-ed piece in the *Washington Post*. Also in June, *The San Francisco Chronicle* published an op-ed piece by Aaron Belkin. In July, PBS television aired a ten-minute report on the Center's research on gays and lesbians in foreign militaries. Finally, the "early bird," a newsletter that the Pentagon sends to its own senior officers every morning, published the Center's analysis of declining military homophobia. Newspaper and television coverage of the Center is available at www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu in the "media" section.

CENTER HIRES ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Geoffrey Bateman has joined the Center as Assistant Director. Bateman is co-editor of a book on gays and lesbians in the military that is under contract with Lynne Rienner publishers, and he is writing his doctoral dissertation at UCSB on the history of sexuality and eighteenth century British culture. Bateman spent two years in Portland, Oregon, working at the Cascade AIDS Project, where he coordinated a number of community-based HIV prevention programs, including a social-support youth program for the suburban area surrounding Vancouver, WA; the Neighborhood Men Talk program; and a peer-based HIV testing clinic. Previous to his work in Portland, Bateman received a Fulbright Fellowship to teach in Austria.

PROGRAMMING NEWS

On August 19, 2001, CSSMM presented "Defending Liberty," a panel discussion at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles. Attended by over 200 people, the event followed the performance of "Another American Asking and Telling" by Marc Wolf. Discussants included Col. Margarethe Cammermeyer and professors Melissa Embser-Herbert, Laura Miller, and Charles Moskos. Focusing primarily on whether the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy has been successful, the panel featured heated exchanges.

Nancy D. Kates came to UCSB on May 17, 2001 to present her award-winning film "Their Own Vietnam." Focusing on American women who served in the Vietnam War, the film explores some of the difficulties women face working in a largely male environment. Kates addressed an audience of about 70 students in a UCSB undergraduate course on gays and lesbians in the military.

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

The CSSMM has awarded a research fellowship of \$350 to Marie Pagliarini, a doctoral candidate in Religious Studies at UCSB. Her research concerns the spirituality of 19th century Georgetown Visitation nuns, whose convent was established in the late 18th century in Washington, D.C. She focuses on the complex interrelationship between religion, the body, and the construction of subjectivity, examining how life in the convent attempted to discipline the sexual behavior and thoughts of the nuns. The Center is interested in supporting scholarship that discusses the relationships between "total" institutions (such as the military, convents, prisons, and fraternities) and sexuality. Applications may be found on-line.

Director Aaron Belkin
Assistant Director Geoffrey Bateman
Director of Communication Nathaniel Frank
Public Relations Advisor David Phelps
Newsletter/Web Designer Karla Milosevich
Filmmaker-in-Residence Michele Sieglitz
Research Assistants Danielle Brown, Andrea Ebreck,
Maya Rupert

The Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military is a formal research unit of the University of California, Santa Barbara. You can reach the Center at (805) 893-5664; (805) 893-3309 (fax); belkin@polsci.ucsb.edu; or <http://www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu>.



Marc Wolf, Laura Miller, Aaron Belkin, Melissa Embser-Herbert, Charles Moskos, and Margarethe Cammermeyer participated in panel at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles on the future of the gay ban.

DEVELOPMENT NEWS

The Center is very grateful to the R. Gwin Follis Foundation of San Francisco for its two-year \$70,000 grant. This grant is the largest that CSSMM has ever received. As well as generously supporting the Center's ongoing work, the R. Gwin Follis Foundation also funded the Center's conference last December, at which over twenty experts from around the world convened to debate the costs and benefits of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. The Foundation has been a strong supporter of LGBT community organizations in the San Francisco area.

The Center is also very grateful to the Gill Foundation of Denver, Colorado for a grant of \$12,500. This is the third year in a row that Gill, whose mission is to secure equal opportunity for all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, has supported the Center. The Center is also very grateful to the Richard Nathan Anti-Homophobia Trusts for a grant of \$3,500, and to Mary Kathryn Friebe, Bruce Presley, Andy Tobias, and Jeff Wolk for their individual donations of \$1,000 each.

Finally, the Center offers special thanks to Jeff Wolk of New York. Wolk, who is President of Fenwick-Keats Realty, opened his home to the Center for a fundraising event on October 23. As we go to press, details on the event are not yet available, but we will include a description in our next newsletter.

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SEXUAL MINORITIES IN THE MILITARY

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
SANTA BARBARA, CA 93106-9420