

commitment to report embarrassing findings, to avoid reaching conclusions prior to examining the evidence, and to change one's mind when data contradict original expectations. My institute's staff and I always report findings that do not confirm our expectations or beliefs (see, for example, the third case of "Multinational Military Units" at [www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu](http://www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu)), which is why Charles Moskos, architect of DADT, wrote in an email that my scholarship is "reflective of integrity and honesty." When I asked Moskos for permission to use the quote in this essay, he responded, "Aaron, absolutely. Moreover, I have mentioned to many others that your reporting facts not supportive of your position is more remarkable and rare."

While my passion for research derives in part from a desire to hold experts who fail to tell the truth accountable, my research conclusions follow from evidence, not from personal beliefs. Here's proof. If Craft or others can identify foreign militaries whose effectiveness deteriorated or whose health care systems were overwhelmed as a result of eliminating a ban, I will modify my views accordingly. (My institute will entertain fellowship applications for this research, as always, in good faith.)

The difference between Craft and me is not that one of us is political while the other is devoted to fact, but that I examine all available data to determine whether the costs of the ban outweigh its benefits, and remain open to changing my views if the evidence warrants, while Craft actively seeks data, sometimes from dubious sources, and ignores other evidence, to justify his predetermined position. As I argued in my *Parameters* article, the gay ban is based on prejudice, not concerns about readiness, and prejudice tends to defy reasoned deliberation.

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

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 3

SPRING 2004

Dear Reader,

This issue of our newsletter is devoted to a lengthy exchange that appears in the current issue of *Parameters*, the official journal of the U.S. Army War College. The journal is distributed widely to 12,000 military and political leaders.

In the exchange, Major Joseph A. Craft of the U.S. Marine Corps says that the CSSMM is "a homosexual activist group spreading pure propaganda poorly disguised as legitimate research." Craft adds that

the Center is "engaged in an intense information campaign to market, normalize, and legitimize the homosexual political agenda." In response, I question Craft's use of logic and evidence.

Thank you, as always, for your interest in the CSSMM's research.

Aaron Belkin  
Director, CSSMM

Reprinted from:

## PARAMETERS

US Army War College Quarterly, Spring 2004, Vol. XXXIV, No. 2

### *Legitimate Debate, or Gay Propaganda?*

#### To the Editor:

In an interview provided by a gay activist group, the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN), Aaron Belkin said he was surprised when *Parameters* elected to publish his article "Don't Ask, Don't Tell: Is the Gay Ban Based on Military Necessity?" (Summer 2003).<sup>1</sup> I was surprised too—surprised that the Army War College's respected journal would serve as a platform for a homosexual activist group spreading pure propaganda poorly disguised as legitimate research.

In his article, Belkin argued that our government and military should "have the integrity to admit that current American policy is based on prejudice, not on military necessity."<sup>2</sup> As proof, he cited several studies conducted by an organization he leads, the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military (CSSMM). I hadn't heard of it, so I looked it up (I wonder if *Parameters* did). At its website, one recognizes that CSSMM is a political action group, not an independent research organization.<sup>3</sup> In the *Gay People's Chronicle*, Belkin explains that CSSMM was founded in 1998 to combat claims that support the US ban on gays in the military and "for the purpose of defeating the Colin Powells of the world the next time the issue is brought before Congress."<sup>4</sup> Do Belkin's statements suggest his research will be unbiased?

Belkin states that in case studies on homosexual military integration in Australia, Canada, Israel, and Britain, his organization interviewed "every identifiable pro-gay and anti-gay expert . . . in each country. . .

including officers and enlisted personnel, ministry representatives, academics, veterans, politicians, and nongovernmental observers." Surprisingly, according to his "research," only 104 "experts" exist in these four countries and various fields. Even more surprising, apparently none of these experts, including the anti-gay ones, had an opinion in support of the gay ban worthy to be included in his "findings."<sup>5</sup>

One of Belkin's key arguments is that Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) is based on anecdotes and misleading surveys instead of quantitative evidence. Belkin explained in other interviews: "There are two forms of data that Moskos [Professor Charles Moskos, author of DADT] and the right wing use to lie to Congress. One is that they use anecdotes, not evidence. Anecdotes can be used to show whatever you want as long as you pick the right anecdotes. . . . [And] they use statistical surveys of straight soldiers showing that they have a dislike of gay soldiers, which they translate into unit cohesion falling apart."<sup>6</sup> . . . "The generals lied to Congress in 1993 about unit cohesion."<sup>7</sup>

Yet Belkin's article is entirely anecdotal. It is nothing more than selected quotes from supposed experts who claim that homosexual integration has had no impact on unit cohesion or military readiness. A quick review of the author's endnotes, cross-checked with an internet search, reveals the questionable credentials and political leanings of most of these experts. At one point, Belkin refers to a 1995 Canadian government report which

supposedly indicates that lifting the ban on gays in the military had “no effect.” However, his endnote does not cite the report but a “personal communication with Karol Wenek.”<sup>78</sup>

While Belkin condemns statistical surveys presented to Congress to support DADT, he has no problem arguing his case with a survey that he administered with a colleague to 194 combat soldiers.<sup>9</sup> Belkin also claims that his political action group reviewed 622 documents and articles which “revealed no evidence that the lifting of the gay bans undermined military performance, led to difficulties in recruiting or retention, or increased the rate of HIV infection.”<sup>10</sup> However, he fails to identify any of these documents and offers no specific data to back his claim. The data concerning HIV would be especially interesting considering that Britain did not lift its ban until 2000 and, unlike the United States, does not positively screen for HIV annually.

Belkin fails to offer any genuine evidence or quantitative data to support his claims because the data clearly support the military’s position that lifting the ban on homosexuality would significantly detract from combat readiness. Regardless of how one feels about the associated moral issues, the fact is that homosexuality involves an unhealthy, high-risk lifestyle that would potentially overwhelm the military’s limited healthcare system.

According to an Army survey, 80 percent of soldiers who tested positive for HIV admitted to contracting the virus through homosexual contact, and the actual percentage may be higher.<sup>11</sup> According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), homosexual men are a thousand times more likely to contract AIDS than the general male heterosexual population.<sup>12</sup> The carrier rate of hepatitis B among homosexuals is 20 to 50 times that of the general public.<sup>13</sup> The *New England Journal of Medicine* reported that risk of anal cancer rises by an astounding 4,000 percent for those engaging in homosexual intercourse and doubles again for those who are HIV positive. An estimated 30 percent of all 20-year-old homosexual men will be HIVpositive or dead by the age of 30.<sup>14</sup> Evidence also shows that the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases within the homosexual community is growing. The CDC says cases of HIV among gay and bisexual men have risen nearly 18 percent over the last three years.<sup>15</sup> Clearly, it is not in the best interest of the military to end its ban on homosexuality.

Belkin, his organization, and others like it are not really interested a genuine study on the impact of homosexuality within the military, they are engaged in an intense information campaign to market, normalize, and legitimize the homosexual political agenda. This strategy, commonly referred to as “conversion,” involves flooding the marketplace of ideas with carefully crafted rhetoric to shape what society thinks. *Parameters* has helped Belkin legitimize his propaganda. According to the SLDN, Belkin touts that “he hasn’t gotten any negative reaction to his piece in the journal, which goes out to about 13,000 senior military leaders and political leaders, and that he has received positive letters from gay officers who were cheered by the result of his work.”<sup>16</sup> The implication is that his arguments have proven irrefutable by military leaders.

According to SLDN, gay activists chose 2003 “to start a campaign against DADT.”<sup>17</sup> They realize that future decisions concerning gays in the military will be based on politics and emotion rather than facts. The 1974 decision of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) to remove homosexuality as a pathological psychiatric condition from the Diagnostic Statistical Manual was not based on new scientific findings

but was the result of gay activism. As stated by gay-activist researcher Simon Levay, “Gay activism was clearly the force that propelled the APA to declassify homosexuality.”<sup>18</sup>

It was political action, not military necessity, which led to Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell in 1993 when President Clinton fulfilled his campaign promise to the homosexual lobby, which had contributed more than \$3 million to his campaign.<sup>19</sup> As Belkin points out in his article, Australia, Canada, Israel, and Britain lifted their gay bans, despite opposition from their military services, due to political action.<sup>20</sup> Today, many religious organizations are reversing their historic positions on homosexuality not due to divine revelation but rather due to gay activism. It’s a battle for ideas, and while Belkin’s CSSMM offers \$350 grants to faculty who are willing to promote the homosexual agenda in their syllabi,<sup>21</sup> *Parameters* is willing to do it for free. Disappointing.

#### NOTES

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2. Aaron Belkin, “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell: Is the Gay Ban Based on Military Necessity?” *Parameters*, 33 (Summer 2003), 118.
3. Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military (CSSMM), <http://www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu>.
4. Eric Resnick, “Israeli Military Not Affected By Open Policy, Study Says,” 7 July 2000, *Gay People’s Chronicle – Lead News Stories*, <http://www.gaypeopleschronicle.com/stories/00jul7.htm>.
5. Belkin, pp. 109-10.
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9. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
11. D. J. Pollock, “US Department of Defense Policy on Homosexuality in the Armed Forces: Military Necessity or Unfair Discrimination?” MMS thesis (Quantico, Va.: Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 1993).
12. US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control, National Center for Infectious Diseases, Division of HIV/AIDS, *The HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report*, December 2001.
13. Barney R. Barendse, “Health Risk of Homosexual Lifestyle in the Military,” MMS thesis (Quantico, Va.: Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 1993).
14. Focus on the Family, CitizenLink, “Straight Answers: Exposing the Myths and Facts about Homosexuality,” <http://www.family.org/cforum/fosi/homosexuality/maf/a0028248.cfm>.
15. Ed Vitaglian, “Sexual Suicide,” *American Family Association Journal*, September 2003.
16. Etling.
17. *Ibid.*
18. A. Dean Byrd, et al., “The Innate-Immutable Argument Finds No Basis in Science,” National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuals (NARTH), <http://www.narth.com/docs/innate.html>.
19. Steven C. Shultis, “The Corps and the Homosexual: A Time for Campaigning and Moral Courage,” MMS thesis (Quantico, Va.: Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 1993).
20. Belkin, p. 109.
21. See the CSSMM website “Fellowship” link.

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## Aaron Belkin replies

#### To the Editor:

Major Craft frames my research as propaganda and implies that anyone who agrees with me is being manipulated by the gay lobby. Even if this were true, Craft does not show that lifting the gay ban would undermine readiness. And, when one realizes that Craft’s accusations about my scholarship are, at best, without merit, his failure to engage in honest debate becomes even more apparent. To save space, the editors asked me not to use footnotes, but I have posted documentation for this reply at [www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu](http://www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu).

Craft asserts that "lifting the ban on homosexuality would significantly detract from combat readiness." But why, if allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly undermines readiness, hasn’t anyone been able to identify a single military whose effectiveness deteriorated after the elimination of a ban? To the contrary, U.S. officials praise the performance of Britain and other coalition partners. Scholars at RAND and PERSEREC have concluded that eliminating the ban would not undermine readiness. Admiral John Hutson, former Navy JAG, says that the ban is a failed policy that undermines the military, and General Wesley Clark says the ban does not work. During the first Gulf War, the ban was suspended via stop-loss order without any apparent impact on readiness. Military leaders know that gays don’t undermine readiness, or they would never suspend the ban during war.

Craft claims that because gay service members are likely to contract HIV and other STDs, lifting the ban would "overwhelm the military’s limited health care system." But many thousands of gays already serve without overwhelming the system, and lifting the ban will not increase their numbers significantly. Currently, approximately 1,000 service members are HIV-positive (.07% of the force) and all personnel are screened for HIV prior to accession and frequently thereafter. There is no evidence that the health care systems of any of the 24 foreign militaries that lifted their bans have been overwhelmed or that rates of HIV or other STDs increased as a result of integration.

According to Craft, gays live "unhealthy, high-risk" lifestyles. But DoD reports that 41.8% of service members engage in binge drinking, 17.9% do not wear motorcycle helmets, and 57.9% of those who are unmarried and sexually active did not use condoms during their last sexual encounter, a troubling finding given our history in places like Olongapo. Sound public policy would address risky behavior as a service-wide problem rather than singling out gays.

While Craft invents imagined costs he asserts would result from lifting the ban, even though no organizations that lifted bans experienced such problems, he ignores *actual* costs the Pentagon must pay to sustain DADT. These include wasted money and talent and embarrassing media coverage that sometimes puzzles the American public, 79% of which believes that gays should be allowed to serve openly according to a December, 2003 Gallup poll.

As to Craft’s charges that my methodology and evidence are flawed, respected, mainstream social scientists see things differently; my work on gays in the military appears in highly-regarded, peer-review journals such as *International Security* and *Armed Forces and Society* which are neither liberal nor pro-gay, and which do not publish research based on flimsy methodology or data.

Craft questions a passage that says, "A 1995 internal report from the Canadian government on the lifting of the ban concluded, ‘Despite all the anxiety that existed through the late 80s into the early 90s about the change in policy, here’s what the indicators show – no effect.’" The

supporting footnote cites a "Personal communication with Karol Wenek, Directorate of Policy Analysis and Development, Canadian Forces, 20 January, 2000." I cited Wenek rather than the document ("Briefing Note for Director of Public Policy," Ottawa, Canadian Forces, 25 August 1995), because the *Parameters* quote was Wenek’s description of the report’s conclusion. I am glad to share the report or connect interested scholars with Wenek.

My research for the *Parameters* article consisted of extensive literature reviews and interviews of officers and enlisted personnel, ministry representatives, academics, veterans, politicians, and nongovernmental observers (the latter group included activists). Craft questions my decision to interview activists, but consider how vigilantly women’s groups monitor the U.S. military for trouble. My colleagues and I included activists among our interviewees because they are among the *most* likely to know whether integration caused problems in their countries.

Craft finds it "surprising [that] apparently none of the experts, including the anti-gay ones, had an opinion in support of the gay ban worthy to be included in [my] findings." But none reported that readiness suffered as a result of integration. Consider, for example, Professor Christopher Dandeker, former Chair of War Studies at Kings College London and perhaps the most distinguished scholar of the British military. In 1999, Dandeker wrote that if Britain lifted its ban, readiness would deteriorate. After British policy changed, Dandeker concluded that his prediction had been incorrect. I am glad to help Craft or others contact our interviewees to verify our findings.

Craft claims I did not interview all possible experts, and says my article "fails to identify any...documents and offers no specific data." But *Parameters* does not allow authors to publish complete bibliographies. I invite anyone interested in my source lists to consult the extensive reference sections of studies listed in footnote 6 of the article. As those studies explain in detail, my colleagues and I used standard social scientific practices to ensure that our search for documents and experts was thorough.

Finally, Craft mischaracterizes my position on anecdotes and statistics. Anecdotes are useful when they illustrate trends. But even a large number of anecdotes featuring red-haired soldiers who undermine readiness would not demonstrate that red-haired soldiers undermine readiness *on average*. The dishonesty of the 1993 Congressional hearings was not the inclusion of anecdotes about gay service members who undermined readiness, but the failure to determine whether those anecdotes represented overall trends. By contrast, when the totality of experts on a particular military testifies that there is no indication that lifting a ban undermined readiness, that is not anecdotal evidence.

I would welcome the opportunity to analyze the unit cohesion rationale statistically, and I requested permission to conduct such a study. The Pentagon declined to cooperate, and its refusal, which I’ll share with interested readers, is fascinating. My complaint about surveys used to justify DADT is not that they are statistical, but that heterosexual dislike of gays is not evidence that lifting the ban would undermine readiness. For example, 66% of male British service members said they would not serve with gays if the ban was lifted, but ultimately the policy transition proved unproblematic.

What about personal and political bias? Perhaps the most important distinction between honest scholarship and propaganda turns on a