

A question of logistics, not rights

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Contributing Editor

Bill Clinton has ordered the military to stop hunting down and discharging homosexuals from the military, and to stop questioning prospective soldiers about their sexual orientation, pending a six-month study into the matter. What this study is going to find is that the military itself is universally opposed to allowing avowed homosexuals into the armed forces—so opposed that every member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, including General Colin Powell, have threatened to resign if the action is taken.

Let us assume, for a moment, that draft-dodger Clinton is somewhat qualified to question the judgment of these career military men about what is best for the armed forces. (Obviously, he is not.) Let us consider the worthiness of the proposal.

One of the mainstays of the American military system is inter-unit camaraderie. Men bunk, shower, eat and live every intimate facet of their lives in direct contact with one another, women do the same, and never the twain do meet, under those intimate circumstances. Much of the reason for this is to limit "fraternization" between various fighting personnel. Fighting units must be just that—units—bound inextricably to each other through bonds of friendship and hardship that fraternity men who have endured pledging can only begin to imagine. (And those who have not done even that, cannot probably fathom.)

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How, pray, is the addition of openly homosexual individuals going to affect this relationship? Well, first of all, what is to be done with these homosexuals? To ensure that no sexually provocative situations occurred, one lesbian would have to be based with every battalion of men, one gay man with every battalion of women. Any greater concentration of homosexuals opens the door for inter-battalion fraternization. In military units with large groups of homosexuals, it is not hard to imagine situations in which jealousies, antagonisms and other camaraderie-defeating emotions developing among gays competing for one another's affections. Those who believe that such

emotional and sexual attachment will not develop, consider: imagine living in intimate proximity with 40 women (or men, for women), some of whom, by the nature of their duty, are very attractive to you. You eat with them, shower with them, sleep directly beside them, share secrets with them, and are responsible for their livelihood, as are they for yours. Do you really think you would not experience...ah hem...sexual excitement, and will you not attempt to act to relieve that excitement? Of course you would. Then don't expect homosexuals not to act likewise.

Openly homosexual servicemen will ruin the military. Their presence will be impossible to regulate without condoning (and in fact making unavoidable) the sexual relations that have been so rigorously avoided in the co-ed military in an attempt to maintain the esprit d'corps so necessary to a worthwhile fighting force.

Arguments against this reasoning remind that there are already gays in the military. That's true; there are. The already-serving homosexuals, though, know well that to act on their sexual tendencies is to face discharge from the service, a discharge which will label the serviceman a homosexual for future prospective employers. He cannot act on his impulses and remain in the service. With the end of the ban on gays in the military, such will not be the case.

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United States is not to be the stage for any random social experiment, rather it serves the focused and singular purpose of protecting the interests of the United States against all that would threaten those interests. The homosexual special-interest groups would do well to consider the treatment that their brethren receive in other countries: in China, the penalty for homosexual activity is castration; in France, a soldier convicted of homosexuality is permitted one final suicide charge against the enemy. The United States military protect homosexual civilian rights just as assuredly as it protects the rights and security of all other Americans. Such security is not to be jeopardized to fulfill some politically correct agenda.

The army rejects applicants because they are too tall, too short, too fat, because they are diabetic, have a bad heart, or had asthma as a child. They reject such applicants because these applicants do not, by nature of their being, fit the requirements for service in the very specialized role demanded by the military. For exactly similar reasons, neither do homosexuals.

This is not a matter of individual rights, nor does it concern the question of the inherent morality of the homosexual lifestyle. The question is one of logistics and possibilities.

In this case, as in all cases military, the draft-dodger must defer to the wisdom of the military men.

Excluding gays merely prejudiced

Paul Caputo



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The military, such as it is, has offered the public a host of reasons not to allow homosexuals to enlist. These reasons, however, can be broken down into one category: sheer, unbridled bigotry.

The reasons not to allow homosexuals in the military are based on unfounded fear and egotistical heterosexism. The military is exhibiting the sort of social acceptance these days that would make Hitler proud.

The sad thing is that those against gays serving their country in the military are spewing the exact same prejudiced rhetoric that the country heard years ago about African Americans in the army. We

hear cries of "THEY're not fit to serve," "I don't want my life in the hands of one of THEM," and "We can't be expected to work in close quarters with

THEM." Many people now accept these as valid arguments against gays, the same way Americans once accepted them against blacks. Now blacks are more highly represented in the military than they are in many other sectors of society.

Many higher-ups in the army profess that gays in the military would subject heterosexual soldiers to unnecessary dan-

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ger. These dangers, they say, consist of sexually deviant behavior (i.e. rape) and the risk of AIDS. I hate to disturb the military by bringing actual facts into an argument that, for them, goes no further than unfounded prejudice, but the military does not have a sparkling record on sexual offenses. Before it convicts all gays of being sexually deviant by virtue of being gay, the military should try to account for its own track record on sexual violations in its heterosexual population.

To bring AIDS into an argument against homosexuals is irresponsible, sensationalist fearmongering. Heterosexuals are already a higher risk group than homosexuals for contracting AIDS, and the number of HIV positive heterosexuals is rising faster than it is in the gay community.

Having discounted sexual behavior as a valid reason not to allow gays in the military, we are told that gays would adversely affect the morale and sense of brotherhood in military units. When this argument was made against blacks, it was disregarded in the name of social progress. The fact that the American military is decades behind the rest of the western world in terms of social progressivity and acceptance should not be used as a viable argument against homosexuals.

What the military does not see is that it is not a question of sexual orientation. It is a question of sexual behavior. If a military

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person, gay or heterosexual, commits a sexual offense, then that person should not be allowed in the army. Otherwise, it seems wholly un-American not to allow willing and able-bodied American citizens to serve their country in uniform. It would seem to me that it would be more in tune with American ideals not to allow prejudiced bigots to serve in the military. However, since they're already in charge, it would be hard to kick them out.

Most of the American public has accepted the fact that each and every American citizen has the right to fight for his or her country. According to TIME magazine, 57 percent of American citizens feel that gays should be allowed to serve in the military, whereas only 37 percent feel that the ban should not be lifted.

As Americans, we should feel collectively embarrassed for our country when we hear that a gay man in North Carolina who has nothing to do with the military was thoroughly beaten by three marines outside a gay bar. We should take pride, though, in the fact that our president is standing on principle, and fighting to change the fact that we are one of the only countries in the western world not to allow gays in the military. He has taken preliminary steps to do so already. In the name of equality and social progress, we should all hope that he succeeds.

The Debate: Gays In The Military