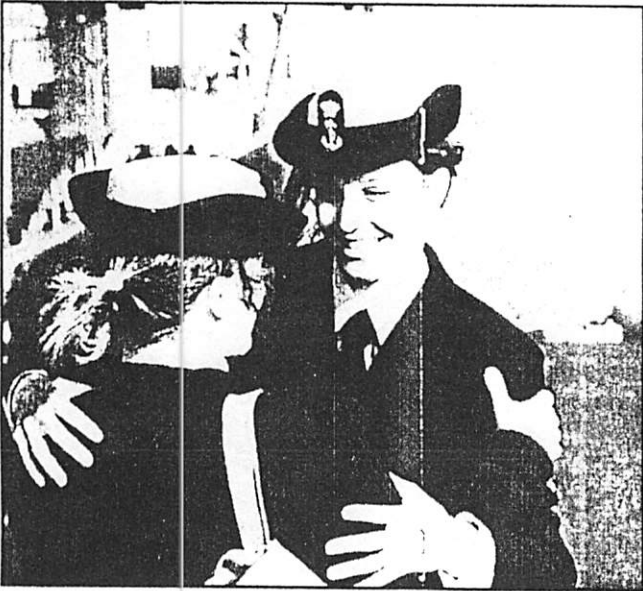


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GAYS IN THE MILITARY

Foreign Forces Can Afford Experiments In Social Engineering — United States Cannot

by James Brantley



Dutch department of defense booklet tells enlistees it's OK to be gay, officially. And military doctors, psychiatrists — even priests — in Holland are required to complete courses to help gays come out of the wall-locker.

Proponents of allowing homosexuals in the U.S. military point out that homosexuals are allowed in most of the armies of Western Europe, Israel and some other nations. This argument is fallacious, because it is predicated on the mere presence of homosexuals, rather than a determination of the success of their integration.

Western European military forces that allow homosexuals aren't comparable to the U.S. military, either in size, mission, history or conditions of service. The United States has kept around

2 million men under arms, while many European militaries have less than 100,000 men each. The United States has a voluntary military with a four-year enlistment, while men in Western European countries are drafted for about a year. The United States has relatively good discipline, while armies in some countries such as the Netherlands are fast slipping the reins of traditional military discipline. Conscripts there are highly paid and belong to a draftees union. Troops don't have to salute, have loose dress regulations and are paid for overtime.

The United States has a worldwide military mission, European armies do not. During the period that the policies regarding homosexuals were put in place, none of these nations could rely on their own armed forces to protect them from the Warsaw Pact. They relied on the U.S. armed forces for their national survival. Perhaps that's why they felt they had more freedom to toy with the social makeup of their armed forces.

The social conditions and laws regarding homosexuality are vastly different in some European countries from anything you would find in the United States. Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands have been pioneers in radical social legislation, allowing people to do anything within reason. These countries have specific civil rights laws that guarantee equal rights for homosexuals in all areas of society. Thus, the armed forces of these five countries have no choice about letting homosexuals into their ranks. The United States has no similar national civil rights law that prevents discrimination by sexual preference.

Marriage In The Barracks

In Denmark, homosexual troops can marry each other. This started in 1989 when Denmark passed a law allowing homosexual marriages. Since then, one out of five marriages in Denmark has been between homosexuals. At this writing, a proposal to allow homosexual marriages is before the parliament of Norway, and is expected to pass. Homosexuals in Belgium, Sweden and the Netherlands are fighting for the right to marry also. Homosexuals in Sweden already fall under the same laws as single heterosexuals who cohabit. If homosexuals are allowed in the U.S. military, what happens if they are assigned to a NATO unit in one of these

countries and decide to either marry a local same-sex citizen or one of their own buddies?

Social and military differences aside, perhaps an argument using one of these countries as an example could gain some validity if homosexuals had been truly integrated, and were accepted by troops who are products of these very liberal societies. But evidence indicates that they are *not* accepted. If severe punishments are indicators of severe problems, Norway and Denmark must be finding it impossible to successfully integrate homosexuals: In Norway, soldiers who threaten, scorn, or spite homosexual soldiers are subject to stiff fines and up to two years in jail. In Denmark, harassing a homosexual will get you booted out of the military.

The Netherlands allowed homosexuals in its military forces almost two decades ago, but still hasn't convinced its soldiers to accept them. But it's not from lack of trying. The Netherlands has a very aggressive indoctrination program that tries to convince heterosexual troops that homosexuals are OK and persuade homosexuals to come out of the closet. All soldiers attend four days of sensitivity training and doctors, psychiatrists and priests are given training to help homosexual troops come out of the closet. The troops are even given a fancy booklet on the acceptability of homosexuality in the military (see photos).

Have the troops bought the message? A Dutch navy report released in 1991 indicates they haven't. The report states that Dutch sailors and marines consider homosexuals to be inferior, and that there is widespread discrimination, verbal abuse, and some physical assaults against openly homosexual personnel. The report indicates that most homosexuals stay in the closet so they will be accepted by their peers, and not hurt their chances for promotions or choice assignments.

Five out of nine other Western European nations officially allow homosexuals into their military forces. These are Germany, France, Spain, Portugal and Switzerland. The French and German armed forces use every loophole possible to keep homosexuals out, or to get them out once they are in. In France, homosexuals who can show that homosexuality has rendered them "psychologically abnormal," or unable to control their sexual urges can be exempted from the draft. This excuse is routinely used and approved. Anyone already in the French military who is discovered to be homosexual is referred to a doctor for examination, and his commander recommends that he resign. But he can't be forced to resign.

Bundeswehr Buddies

Homosexuals can avoid being drafted into the German military by testifying that they wouldn't be able to control their sexual urges, or request alternative mandatory service. Although there is no official regulation, recruits discovered to be homosexual are routinely discharged. Discrimination against openly homosexual career officers and NCOs isn't a matter of individual spite, but official policy. The *Bundeswehr* withholds their promotions and limits their assignments because it says "homosexuals cannot command adequate respect." The Swiss allow homosexuals to serve but forbid what they call "homosexual cliques." The Spanish officially consider sexuality a private matter, but unofficially consider homosexuality unmanly and a disgrace. Open homosexuality can end an officer's career.

Israel is used as a shining example of the successful integration of open homosexuals into an elite, combat-tested military force. But when we look at Israel, all we see is another dead end. Homosexuals have only been allowed in Israeli forces since 1988, and the military has formal authority to limit their use. Recruits who proclaim their homosexuality, or soldiers later found to be homosexual, must undergo psychological testing to determine if they can be accepted, or remain in the military. Those that are allowed to stay aren't given jobs that require a top security clearance, and are rarely assigned to combat units. Openly homosexual soldiers are not allowed to live in the barracks with other soldiers, but are generally assigned to an open base where they can go home at night.

Dr. Charles Moskos, a military sociologist at Northwestern University, has recently finished a study of homosexuality in

Israel. Moskos says that "Israel is a homophobic society that treats homosexuals like women."

Israel may sound rough, but homosexual acts will land you in a jail cell anywhere else in the Middle East. If you happen to be in Saudi Arabia, the punishment is execution. England, Greece, Turkey, New Zealand, Peru, Venezuela, Korea, India, Pakistan and all former Warsaw Pact countries still ban homosexuals from their military services. In Italy, homosexuals are exempt from the draft. Many strongly conservative countries like China and Japan consider homosexuality such a mark of dishonor that they are puzzled why anyone would even want to ask the question of a new recruit.

Chicken In Eagle Feathers

It's obvious that there isn't a single example where the integration of a substantial number of open homosexuals into the military of any nation has met with success. The key word is "open." Many thousands of homosexuals have been successful in their military careers. But this success — both in the U.S. military



Brothers-in-Arms: Dutch defense department pamphlet teaches sensitivity toward gays in uniform, shows young man greeting his boyfriend in Amsterdam's Schiphol airport.

and in foreign forces - has been a function of their success in maintaining a masquerade as a heterosexual. Homosexuality becomes a disruptive factor only when a homosexual soldier insists on making his orientation known.

When you declare your status, you're describing your behavior. What foreign countries have experienced in this regard is becoming clear in the case of Keith Meinhold, the only court-approved open homosexual in the U.S. military. In a sworn court deposition, Meinhold's commander stated that "Meinhold's reinstatement had struck a discordant note with the troops," and that "some personnel have refused to fly with Meinhold, forcing the Navy to rework their schedules." When this deposition started circulating through Congress, Rep. Patricia Schroeder was outraged. Apparently she has a problem with the truth when it doesn't fit her political slogans.

The strategy of the homosexual rights movement is clear. Once the military has been forced to accept homosexuals, it will provide a powerful precedent for the use of federal power to attempt to coerce the acceptance of homosexuals in every corner of American society. However, a presidential fiat will not gain

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acceptance of homosexuals in the military, because it is not a lifestyle that has gained acceptance in society as a whole. President Clinton needs to carefully consider which voices warrant the most serious consideration prior to issuing any order to allow gays in the military.

Should he listen to the voices of our military leaders, the troops themselves, a solid bloc of veterans' groups, and the majority of the American people? Or should he remain content with satisfying the latest ideological fashion surrounding a group which defines itself through its desire for oral and anal copulation with someone of the same gender — a group who loudly proclaims their victimization, while the behavior by which they define themselves is the engine driving a fatal national plague.

The Democratic leadership of the House recently allowed Rep. Ron Dellums,

the radical congressman from Berkeley, California, to take over as chairman of the critically important House Armed Services Committee. The Democratic leadership reassured everyone that despite Dellums' radical record, he was a fair man that would allow both sides of any argument to be heard. Dellums announced that he intended to use his new powers as a "bully pulpit," and promptly scheduled hearings on gays in the military. Dellums' insistence that the committee only take testimony from past and present homosexual military personnel raised such a storm of protest that the hearings had to be put on indefinite hold. So much for fairness and both sides of an argument.

Let's hope that Clinton gets a true picture of how homosexual military service has worked out in foreign countries, so he doesn't continue under the assumption that it has been successful. If he persists in forcing radical agendas — such as gays in the military or women in combat — onto the military at a time of drastic force reductions, the next time we get into a shooting war, our military may be little more than a debilitated chicken disguised in eagle feathers.

A 20-year USAF veteran with nearly 10 years in the Asian theater, James Brantley's SOF articles cover controversial topics such as gays in the military and women in combat. ✕

6000 WYKX Rd
Frederick
42003