

Gays Say Marines Lack Sensitivity

In Wake of Beating, Corps Rejects Activists' Offer of a Course

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Gay activists are urging the Marine Corps to allow them to conduct sensitivity courses at barracks in Southeast, saying the recent beating of a gay man demonstrated the need.

Jim Kingery, 27, a research analyst who identifies himself as gay, said he was assaulted by a Marine near his home in the 300 block of Ninth Street in Southeast on Sunday night.

Two prior incidents involving homosexuals and Marines stationed at the Capitol Hill barracks have occurred in the last year and a half.

"Every time [the Corps] has turned to the community and said it will not happen again. But every time, it does," said Tom Swift, head of Gay Men and Lesbians Opposing Violence.

Police arrested a suspect, Lance Cpl. Anthony L. James, and have listed the alleged attack as a bias crime.

But a spokeswoman at the Marine barracks said, "We don't have any evidence to suggest that."

The incident is being investigated and a completed report is expected soon, the spokeswoman said.

James could not be reached for comment. The Marine public affairs office said that his barracks did not have a phone.

Kingery claimed that the Marine walked up and "struck me with his fist" a couple of times.

As he staggered, he said, he felt another kick or punch.

He looked up and saw a second man. Kingery yelled and neighbors came out of their houses.

The second man fled the scene, but Kingery held onto James until the police arrived minutes later.

Witnesses said a third man who quickly got into a car and drove away may have been involved.

D.C. police charged James, 22, with assault. Marine Capt. Cathy Engels, a public affairs officer, said James "has been identified as a problem Marine, anyway, and was pending a discharge for a minor disciplinary infraction."

She said two other suspects also are being investigated.

Although none of the suspects said anything to Kingery, he is sure he was attacked because he is gay.

"I must fit enough of a stereotype for the police officer to put it down as bias-related," said Kingery.

Mauro Montoya, Kingery's attorney, said Kingery "could easily be perceived as a gay man. There's also a lack of evidence of any other motive."

Swift said he is scheduled to meet with military officials next week and will ask that Marines be required to attend his group's "own basic sensitivity training program."

Engels said the Marines leadership training program includes information about the need to be respectful of all groups.

She said no outside groups are permitted to conduct sensitivity programs for Marines.

"Our colonel has published a general policy statement that says you can't discriminate against anyone because of their race, sex, or sexual orientation," said Engels.

"We are a diverse group, and because of our location and situations that have occurred in the past, that policy has been emphasized more strongly the past year and a half."