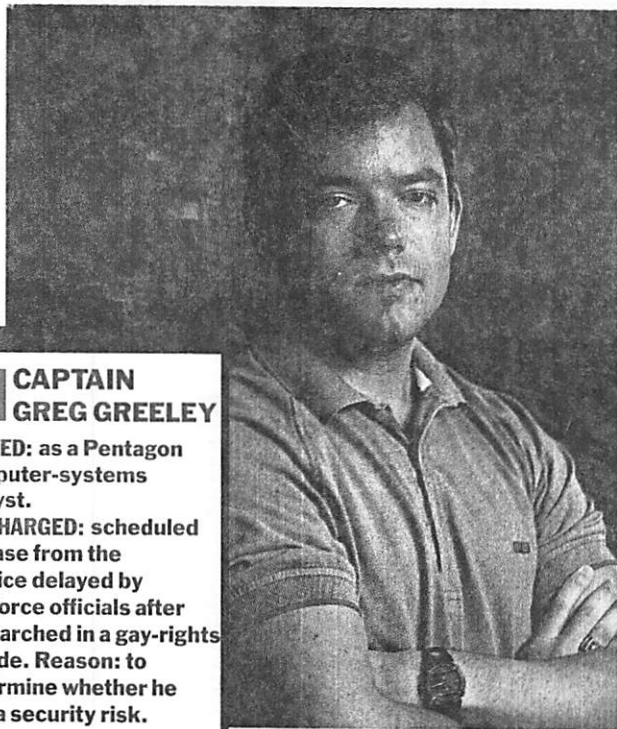




SANDRA JOHNSON—RETNA FOR TIME

H CAPTAIN DUSTY PRUITT

SERVED: 13 years in the Army and reserves training troops to defend against chemical and biological weapons. **DISCHARGED:** after she revealed in a newspaper interview that she was a lesbian. "The closet is a horrible place to be," she says, "and the military is in a deep closet."



H CAPTAIN GREG GREELEY

SERVED: as a Pentagon computer-systems analyst. **DISCHARGED:** scheduled release from the service delayed by Air Force officials after he marched in a gay-rights parade. Reason: to determine whether he was a security risk. **Congressmen accused Pentagon of a witch-hunt.**

TERRY ASHE FOR TIME

Nation

TIME/AUGUST 19, 1991

DEFENSE

Marching Out of The Closet

Should gays be allowed to serve in America's armed forces? The Pentagon has ousted 1,000 of them since Desert Storm, but it is finding it harder than ever to argue that the answer is no.

By **NANCY GIBBS**

For 13 years in the Army and Army Reserve, Captain Dusty Pruitt, an ordained minister, taught soldiers to defend themselves against chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. Her expertise could have been vital in the war against Saddam Hussein. But during Operation Desert Storm, Pruitt was neither protecting nor ministering to soldiers in the Persian Gulf. Her battleground was the Ninth Circuit Court in California, where she was busy fighting to overturn the Army's 1986 decision to discharge her because she is a lesbian. "It's sad," she says,

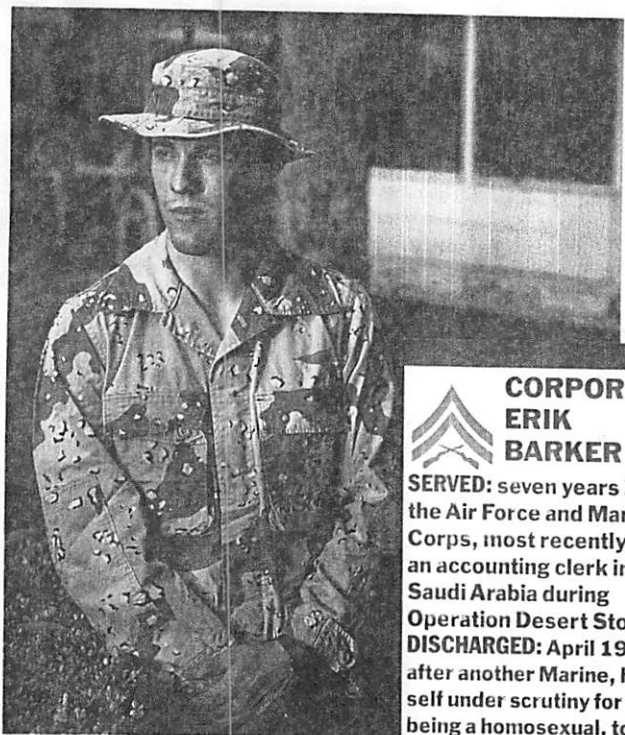
"that the military wastes time bothering people about what they do in their private lives rather than what they do on duty."

In the U.S. military, few patterns are as enduring as the habit of barring qualified men and women from serving their country when they are needed, on the grounds that they are not wanted. Over the centuries, the brass have used strikingly similar arguments to bar racial minorities, women and homosexuals from marching into battle with white heterosexual males.

The presence of these outsiders, officials have warned, would risk security, weaken discipline and jeopardize the chain of command. In 1941 a special committee

wrote an impassioned letter to the Secretary of the Navy pleading that he consider "the close and intimate conditions of life aboard ship, the necessity for the highest possible degree of unity and esprit-de-corps, and the requirements of morale," before allowing black seamen to fight alongside white sailors.

Under the weight of justice and reason, these barriers have fallen one by one. The armed services were integrated by Harry Truman in 1948. Two weeks ago, the Senate voted to allow female pilots to fly in battle, though women soldiers are barred from serving in infantry combat units. But the discriminatory language and attitudes



MARK RICHARDS FOR TIME



**CORPORAL
ERIK
BARKER**

SERVED: seven years in the Air Force and Marine Corps, most recently as an accounting clerk in Saudi Arabia during Operation Desert Storm. **DISCHARGED:** April 1991, after another Marine, himself under scrutiny for being a homosexual, told Marine Corps investigators that Barker was gay.



RICH FRISHMAN FOR TIME



**COLONEL
MARGARETHE
CAMMERMEYER**

SERVED: 23 years as an Army nurse, including a tour of duty in Vietnam. She won a Silver Star and a V.A. Nurse of the Year award. **DISCHARGED:** after she admitted to being a lesbian during an interview for a top security clearance. Officials had praised her outstanding leadership.

still echo when it comes to gays and lesbians. According to the Department of Defense, "homosexuality is incompatible with military service. The presence in the military environment of persons who engage in homosexual conduct or who, by their statements, demonstrate a propensity to engage in homosexual conduct, seriously impairs the accomplishment of the military mission." The prohibition applies not only to those who admit to homosexual activity, but also to those who merely profess homosexual inclinations.

The Pentagon found its rationale under severe attack last week when the *Advocate*, a Los Angeles gay magazine, claimed that a prominent Defense Department official was homosexual. The *Advocate* said that while it does not generally condone "outing," it wanted to call attention to the hypocrisy of the Pentagon's policy on gays. Despite their fine performance in the war, nearly 1,000 gay and lesbian soldiers have been investigated and discharged this year. The flurry of criticism has Pentagon officials squirming to justify a policy whose existence and enforcement seem so at odds with the realities of American society.

Defense Secretary Dick Cheney was in no mood to defend the ban, calling it "an old chestnut" that he inherited from previous Administrations. But he also said he would make no move to overturn it. When asked how he could retain a high-ranking aide who is allegedly gay while forcing the dismissal of many homosexuals from the uniformed services, Cheney invoked a confusing double standard. Gays, he explained, could serve in civilian jobs, where

they would not necessarily pose a security risk. Yet a closet homosexual with access to classified information would surely be more vulnerable to blackmail than a lowly enlisted man.

Officials fall back on the notion that allowing homosexuals to serve on ships or in the trenches would undermine the services' order and morale. Strangely enough, that rationale seems to apply only in peacetime. When Operation Desert Storm was launched, the Pentagon suspended most investigations of suspected homosexuals because they were needed on the front lines. Hundreds of admitted gay soldiers and reservists went off to the gulf. In some cases they were told that once the fighting was over, they would face discharge if they made it back home.

To gay and lesbian soldiers, the Pentagon prohibition reflects only deep-seated prejudice. "It's based on the assumption that all homosexuals are sex maniacs and somehow incapable of acting maturely," says Joe Steffan, a star student who resigned from the Naval Academy in 1987 two weeks before final exams, after his superiors heard that he was gay. According to Allan Berube, author of *Coming Out Under Fire*, 100,000 to 200,000 of the 2 million members of the U.S. armed forces are gay, lesbian or bisexual. Most elude detection by being discreet. "The question is not, 'What happens if we let gays in the military?'" says Berube. "At least 99% stay and serve."

The effort to weed them out can be brutally effective. In January 1943, on the recommendations of military psychiatrists who redefined homosexuality as a medical

Policies Abroad

Britain: Bans homosexuals from its armed forces, although a parliamentary committee last May recommended dropping the policy, because it has resulted in "the loss to the services of some men and women of undoubted competence and good character."

France: Has no law forbidding gays to join the armed forces.

South Africa: Does not question draftees and permanent forces about their sexuality. But recruits who appear to be flagrantly homosexual may undergo a psychological examination and may be dismissed.

Soviet Union: Provides, under Article 121 of the Soviet Criminal Code (which applies equally to the military and civilians), that "Sexual relations of a man with another man . . . shall be punished by deprivation of freedom for a term not exceeding five years."

Japan: Admits gays into the armed forces. Homosexuality is not grounds for discharge or other punishment unless the performance of a soldier is impaired or he fails to "maintain the military's dignity."

disorder rather than a criminal activity, the armed forces decreed that gays could be discharged simply for having homosexual tendencies. Since then, between 80,000 and 100,000 gays and lesbians have been ousted from the military.

In some cities near military bases, vice-squad detectives routinely help military police hunt down soldiers at gay and lesbian bars. Interrogations can last 12 hours, during which suspects are threatened with exposure to their parents, dishonorable discharge, and in the case of some lesbians, loss of custody of their children. Many sus-

pects are pressured to reveal the names of other gay servicemen and -women. The interrogators, says Bridget Wilson of the Military Law Task Force in San Diego, which helps defend gay and lesbian service members, "are routinely dishonest, routinely incompetent and routinely lie to and terrorize service members in an attempt to get them to name other names."

Women are much more likely to come under fire than men, gay rights advocates charge, in part because the presence of women in the services has never been fully accepted. Wilson thinks the greater discharge rates of lesbians reflects the belief that "women in the military are thought to be either whores or dykes. So if you're not a whore you must be a dyke." Though any hint of homosexual activity means close scrutiny, gay military personnel say a good deal of wayward heterosexual activity is tolerated, even tacitly approved, by the military hierarchy. At the end of the gulf war, a Nevada brothel called the Mustang Ranch offered free passes to returning soldiers. "For some reason," says Wilson, "going to a whorehouse in their dress blues is not a problem."

By and large, the presence of gay soldiers is not a major issue within the ranks. Younger soldiers tend to view the prohibition as a relic of bygone bigotry. "People

have asked me, 'How would you feel if you were in the same trench as a gay person?'" says Aric Nissen, 20, a University of Minnesota junior and political-science major enrolled in ROTC. "My response is that I feel it's one more person we could use to help us get out of the trench." Joe Steffan found that while homophobic jokes were standard fare at Annapolis, "a lot of that is a façade. During my last few days, people I barely knew were coming up to me, shaking my hand and saying, 'I'm really sorry this is happening, and I really don't agree with this policy,' and I was stunned at how

form, was rejected as "technically flawed" and for exceeding its authority, but the results were leaked by sympathetic Congressmen. A second report, which was never submitted, found that gay soldiers were less likely to drink, take drugs, or have disciplinary problems than nongay soldiers.

Some high-ranking officials may be ready for a change. After Mary Ann Humphrey, an Army Reserve captain, was discharged for being a lesbian, she wrote a book called *My Country, My Right to Serve* and sent a copy to General Calvin Waller, who was General Norman Schwarzkopf's



Gay Warriors?

Historians suggest that **ALEXANDER THE GREAT** and **RICHARD THE LIONHEARTED** were homosexuals. In 1911 Rear Admiral **EDWARD BARRY**, commander of the U.S. Pacific fleet, was forced to resign after his alleged liaison with a cabin boy. World War I hero **LAWRENCE OF ARABIA** wrote that "men's bodies, in repose or in movement . . . appeal to me directly."

much understanding was underneath that façade of homophobia."

John Gwynn, 31, says that even before he resigned his commission, he felt most of his fellow officers on his nuclear submarine knew that he lived a double life. The submarine corps is highly educated, he notes, "and that seems to fight the ignorance." Of the 160 men on his boat, Gwynn suspects that at least five were known to be gay. But he felt that he was safe from being forced out of the closet. "It's different for officers—you're one of the boys, and [the officers] can't deny that they liked you. The sub is less anonymous and more like a club. As long as they weren't told, it didn't become an ugly incident."

But many gay soldiers continue to play it safe, lying about their sexual preference, fabricating heterosexual lovers, laughing at gay slurs, even entering into camouflage marriages. "It was frightening and horrible having to watch yourself all the time," recalls Dusty Pruitt. "The closet is a horrible place to be, and the military is in a deep closet."

Even before the gulf war, there were some stirrings for change from within the military establishment. Two years ago, the Pentagon commissioned a study that concluded that the antigay policy was irrational. The report, which never got beyond draft

deputy in the gulf war. "I trust that you and all of the other individuals who have experienced such discrimination will one day have your day in court," he wrote back. "It appears that society is about to accept that every person should have the freedoms and privileges that are granted under our great Constitution. Keep the faith!"

The pressure is also growing among organizations that do business with the military. Major college groups have urged that the policy be reviewed, after ROTC cadets were refused their commissions when they admitted to their superiors that they were gay. Faculty members have discovered that they can be denied military research grants if they come under suspicion of homosexuality during security-clearance investigations.

The policy can be overturned only by an act of Congress, a decision by the Secretary of Defense or a Supreme Court ruling. So far, the court has upheld the ban in all the cases it has agreed to hear, and despite public support for reversal, few politicians seem ready to take up the cause. Nonetheless, last week's furor revived a basic question: Can any country with volunteer armed forces afford to exclude talented people on the basis of fear? —*Reported by Scott Brown/Los Angeles, Tom Curry/New York and Bruce van Voorst/Washington*

To "Out" or Not to "Out"

The press wrestles with a thorny issue: When is it appropriate to reveal the private lives of public officials?

By WILLIAM A. HENRY III

When the *Village Voice* was offered a free-lance article last month that purported to expose the homosexuality of a high Pentagon official, editors of the radical New York City weekly decided to reject the piece as an unwarranted invasion of privacy. Last week the same editors permitted a *Voice* columnist to summarize the allegations, complete with the official's name. The rationale for the turnaround: the man's identity had been so widely circulated by other news organizations that continued restraint would have been "a futile exercise."

But at the *Washington Post*, editors chose to cover the controversy without citing the official by name. Explained Karen DeYoung, the *Post's* assistant managing editor for national news: "Our policy is that we don't write about personal lives of public officials unless the personal aspects begin influencing the way they perform their jobs." The paper canceled a Jack Anderson column, normally a featured item, because it named the man, even though editors assumed many of Anderson's 700-plus clients would run the story, making the *Post's* discretion largely symbolic.

The hottest ethical issue for journalists these days is where to draw the line between two colliding rights, the individual's right to privacy and the public's right to know—and then, having drawn the line, how to avoid being pulled across it by cunning manipulators or by the competitive urge on a breaking story. In the case of the Pentagon official, the press coverage was not prompted by any crime, scandal or even news event. It was entirely brought about by gay activists pursuing a political agenda. They had no grudge against the official. Many professed to admire him. But they were determined to embarrass the Pentagon about its exclusion of gays from the armed services. To them, it was hypocritical for Defense Secretary Dick Cheney to retain a high civilian official, knowing—or at least not caring—that he was gay, while continuing to enforce antigay rules that apply to the uniformed ranks.

The activists had an arguable point about the apparent double standard within

the Pentagon. But their tactics are controversial, and the readiness of much of the nation's news media to carry the story about the official raised serious questions about journalistic ethics and quality control. The article exposing the official was printed last week by the *Advocate*, a Los Angeles-based gay magazine published ev-



“The fact that a top Pentagon official is gay presents a double standard.”

—MICHELANGELO SIGNORILE

ery two weeks. In a blatant bid for publicity and newsstand sales, the magazine faxed dozens of advance copies to mainstream journalists. The cover line referred to "outing" the official, a gay neologism for exposure of a homosexual by other homosexuals. The author, Michelangelo Signorile, pioneered the tactic in the defunct New York City gay magazine, *OutWeek*.

Most of the people Signorile quoted had only hearsay knowledge. Their main "evidence" was that the official had supposedly been a regular customer in years gone by at a predominantly gay Washington bar. The few sources who claimed firsthand knowledge about him were generally

permitted to remain anonymous. Even some unnamed sources knew nothing themselves but were merely quoting still more obscure acquaintances: in one anecdote an unidentified man said an apparent one-night stand, picked up in a bar, told him of having "dated" the official.

Hardly any serious newspaper, magazine or network would accept so loosely sourced a story from its own staff. Yet few journalists tried to verify the claims in the *Advocate* before repeating its main point. Syndicated columnist Anderson and his partner Dale Van Atta compounded the damage with a claim that the official "is considering resigning because of accusations that he is a homosexual." Instead, Van Atta admits, the official directly said in an interview he had no plans to quit. Asked to explain this contradiction, Van Atta lamely contended, "I said he was considering resigning, and that's a far cry from saying he was seriously considering it."

Though many major dailies declined to name the official, countless smaller papers ran the Anderson-Van Atta column. Among them was Pennsylvania's Harrisburg *Patriot*, from which the item was in turn excerpted for a Pentagon news summary distributed to 10,000 employees. Other dailies covered the outing debate. The *Detroit News* named the official twice in news stories; the *New York Daily News* identified him in a gossip column. All four TV news networks decided not to use the official's name, but secondary outlets used it, including cable channel CNBC, a corporate sibling of NBC piped into nearly 44 million homes, and New York station WPIX. Reasons ranged from sympathy with the gay activists' arguments to CNBC program executive Andy Friendly's observation, "Everybody's talking about this topic."

Whether it is staking out Gary Hart's bedroom, probing the background of an alleged rape victim or pondering the number of months that passed between marriage and childbirth for the wives of Ronald Reagan and televangelist Pat Robertson, the press almost always strikes some people as having gone too far. For others, whose political cause is being advanced either intentionally or inadvertently, the deplorable can suddenly seem delightful. But the real question is not just who benefits from a media decision. Rather, it is whether the media behave thoughtfully and ethically. If news organizations, in the zeal to keep up with competitors, compromise their standards and let themselves be manipulated, they imperil their credibility and integrity—and ultimately everybody loses.

—Reported by

Linda Williams/New York