

Military's new policy on gays stirs little talk

Some soldiers
say the less
said, the better

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FORT CAMPBELL, Ky. — While the Army decides whether to try two soldiers in the slaying of a gay serviceman, enlisted soldiers interviewed yesterday shrugged off changes in the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy that were announced by the Pentagon Friday.

"I like it the old way," said

Spc. Thomas Long, 27. "I'll almost guarantee you there were gays in the military 100 years ago, gays who died in Vietnam, and people didn't know about it because it was a closed-door policy."

After the beating death at Fort Campbell July 5, the Pentagon ordered commanders to seek approval from senior civilian officials before initiating certain kinds of investigations of admittedly gay soldiers. Commanders were also ordered to institute anti-harassment training at all levels of the service, and military lawyers were told to consult superiors before investigating soldiers suspected of being gay.

Prosecutors say that Pfc.

Barry Winchell, 21, of Kansas City, Mo., was beaten to death with a baseball bat by a fellow soldier and that part of the motive may have been that Winchell was gay. Pfc. Calvin Glover, 18, is charged with murder and Spc. Justin Fisher, 25, is accused of encouraging him and with obstructing the investigation.

Winchell's sexual orientation became known in his unit, and a source of ridicule, after Fisher began teasing him about it, witnesses testified. Also, Winchell's section leader, Sgt. Michael Kleifgen, admitted asking Winchell directly if he were gay.

Yesterday at Fort Campbell, Spc. John Haley, 23, asked,

"Why is the anti-harassment training limited to gays?" He said some aspects of military life, such as surprise searches of barracks and soldiers' belongings, are much too personal.

Pfc. Peter Jones, 23, said that "if there was somebody in the military who was homosexual and carried themselves in such a way that it was hidden, but guys in his unit teased him about it and if the sergeant hears this, he should say, 'Leave this soldier alone.'"

Other soldiers said they were unfamiliar with the "don't ask, don't tell" policy, hadn't heard about the slaying and thought anti-gay sentiment at Fort Campbell was rare.

"This is the first incident I've ever heard of anybody even getting harassed," said Spc. Kelvin Enzlow, 23. "It's basically a surprise that it can happen to another soldier, regardless, because we all wear green."

The case has attracted national attention. An Article 32 hearing, the military equivalent of a grand jury proceeding, ended last week. The post commander, Maj. Gen. Robert Clark, is expected to decide in two weeks whether Glover and Fisher will be court-martialed.

Gay-rights activists were quoted as being dissatisfied with the new guidelines, and Fort Campbell soldiers interviewed yesterday couldn't de-

termine what impact, if any, they would have on homosexuals in the military.

Long said gay bashing at Fort Campbell was "very rare" and said that "if an individual sits in a foxhole and fights for what I believe in, I don't have any right to discriminate against them."

Jones said: "I really think gays are bad for the Army anyway. If there was somebody in my unit that was openly gay, I wouldn't want to work with him because he might try to push up on me."

Enzlow, however, said that "the way I was raised, your business is your business. If you are gay, you are the only one who has to deal with it."