

Gay activity punished after military probe

By Rolf Soderlind
REUTERS NEW AGENCY

BONN — A U.S. Air Force sergeant was sentenced to 60 days in military jail after being found guilty of illegal homosexual acts at an American base in Germany, a U.S. military spokesman said yesterday.

The court-martial was part of a military investigation into homosexual activities at Ramstein air base involving eight U.S. airmen.

The spokesman said the NCO at Ramstein was stripped of his rank, fined \$1,000 and sentenced to 60 days confinement to a U.S. correctional facility at Mannheim.

He was found guilty of sodomy, solicitation to commit sodomy and indecent exposure, the spokesman said.

Rayford was the fourth airman to be court-martialled after the investigation uncovered homosexual activities last year at the base in southwestern Germany.

Officials said the men had been sentenced because their sexual acts had violated the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

U.S. Defense Department officials said such a large number of homosexual cases in one investigation was unusual but not unprecedented at American military bases.

President Clinton last year signed into law a policy of "don't ask, don't tell, don't pursue" under which homosexuals can now serve in the military so long as they keep their sexual orientation private.

But the law is still expected to be challenged in court by homosexual and civil rights groups, who charge that it is just as discriminatory as the decades-long ban on homosexuals in uniform that the new law replaced.

The airmen at Ramstein had been caught in separate homosexual acts and had not been members of a homosexual ring.