

Gays in the military



There will always be strong feelings and debates concerning the topic of homosexuals serving in the United State Military. One thing is certain, things have changed. Is it for better or worse? That is up for the individual to decide. Don't Ask, Don't Tell is the name for the former official U. S. policy (1993-2011) regarding the service of homosexuals in the military.

The term was coined after Pres. Clinton in 1993 signed a law (consisting of statute, regulations, and policy memoranda) directing that military personnel " don't ask, don't tell, don't pursue, and don't harass. What is the fallout from this regulation, what happen after the policy ended in September 20, 2011? In the period between winning election as president in November 1992 and his inauguration in January 1993, Clinton announced his intention to quickly seek an end to the U. S. military's long-standing ban on homosexuals in the ranks. Although the move was popular among many Americans, notably gay activists who had supported Clinton's campaign, and Clinton had promised action during the election campaign, few political analysts thought he would move on such a potentially explosive issue so quickly.

The move met with strong opposition, including from Sen. Sam Nunn, a Democrat from Georgia who headed the Senate Armed Services Committee. Indeed, Clinton's declaration put the president at odds with top military leaders and with a number of key civilians who had oversight responsibilities for the armed forces. After heated debate, Clinton managed to gain support for a compromise measure under which homosexual servicemen and servicewomen could remain in the military if they did not openly declare their sexual orientation, a policy that quickly became known as " Don't Ask,

Don't Tell. Yet military officers were overwhelmingly opposed to that approach, fearing that the mere presence of homosexuals in the armed forces would undermine morale. The policy was further subverted by discrimination suits that upheld the right of gays to serve in the military without fear of discrimination. Under the terms of the law, homosexuals serving in the military were not allowed to talk about their sexual orientation or engage in sexual activity, and commanding officers were not allowed to question service members about their sexual orientation.

Although Clinton introduced "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" as a liberalization of existing policy, saying it was a way for gays to serve in the military when they had previously been excluded from doing so, many gay rights activists criticized the policy for forcing military personnel into secrecy and because it had fallen far short of a policy of complete acceptance. For a variety of reasons, the policy did little to change the behavior of commanders; gay and lesbian soldiers continued to be discharged from service.

During the Iraq War, which began in 2003, the policy came under further scrutiny, as many Arab linguists who were gay were discharged by the military. Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT). By the 15-year anniversary of the law in 2008, more than 12, 000 officers had been discharged from the military for refusing to hide their homosexuality.

When Barack Obama campaigned for the presidency in 2008, he pledged to overturn "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and to allow gay men and lesbians to serve openly in the military (a stance that was, according to public opinion polls, backed by a large majority of the public). During Obama's transition, Robert Gibbs, his press secretary, unequivocally reiterated that position. Although

gay activists hoped that Obama would overturn "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" quickly, discharges continued during Obama's first year in office.

In February 2010 the Pentagon announced its plan to reevaluate the policy and soon began a study, due in late 2010, that would determine how a repeal would affect the military. The following month, new measures were introduced to immediately relax the enforcement of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" to make it more difficult for openly gay military service members to be expelled. The measures included permitting only high-ranking officers to oversee discharge proceedings and requiring higher standards for evidence presented in such cases. For example, under the new guidelines all third-party testimony had to be made under oath.

A new report by a gay rights group says there were nearly a thousand cases of gay harassment in the United States military last year, double the number reported the year before, CBS News Correspondent David Martin reports the report, *Conduct Unbecoming*, is the sixth annual report on the armed forces' "don't ask, don't tell" policy by the Service members Legal Defense Network, a private organization that helps gays and lesbians in the armed forces.

In the report, SDLN claims to have documented 968 incidents of anti-gay harassment, including a murder, assaults, death threats and verbal gay bashing from February 1999 to February 2000, up 142 percent from a record 400 violations the preceding year the report also cites a 30 percent increase in commanders breaking the "don't ask, don't tell" policy. *Abuse Of Gays In Military Increases*.

Homosexuals would present logistical problems. In the interest of heterosexuals, gays would have to be separated into their own barracks. And masses of gay men in a confined area = problem solved? The military would rather have social policies that resemble the likes of North Korea, Syria, and Iran, not Israel, Canada, and the UK. Repeal would infringe on heterosexual soldiers' privacy. Social ostracism isn't reason enough to practice mutual gaze aversion in the showers. The military shouldn't use for social experiments.

Truman's desegregation of the military, which occurred before desegregation of the rest of American society, is certainly something to be frowned upon in retrospect. The U. S. military passed a historic milestone on Tuesday with the repeal of the ban on gays serving openly in uniform, ending a prohibition that President Barack Obama said had forced gay and lesbian service members to "lie about who they are." Opponents had argued that allowing openly gay troops to serve would hamper military effectiveness.

The new "nondiscrimination" law would affect all military branches and communities, including Army and Marine infantry, special operations, Navy SEALs, and submarines. Unlike workers who return home at night, military personnel must accept living conditions that involve "forced intimacy," with little or no privacy. This would be tantamount to forcing female soldiers to share private quarters with men—a situation that would be unacceptable to the majority of military women even if misconduct never occurred.