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The Ethicality of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”

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The United States Army Policy of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” is unethical. What would happen if the Army took the same approach with extremist organizations? It would be okay to be a gang member, skinhead, or neo-nazi, you just cannot tell. What message is the Army sending society by embracing an overall attitude of: “We do not want to know about it?”

The Soldiers in the Army are a slice representation of the American public at large. The Army’s Soldiers are members of all races and both sexes. These Soldiers are heroes, leaders, followers, rapists, thieves, intelligent people, stupid people, killers, nice people, racists, clergy members, and everything that is in American society, to include both heterosexual and homosexual individuals. The Army is the test bed for improving American society and has been for centuries. Recent examples include: desegregation of the Army in the 50’s, expanding roles for women in the military, and Army efforts to minimize sexual harassment in the workplace. The Army provides an excellent way to influence a large cross-section of Americans once there has been a consensus by the American people of a direction to go.

Army integration and the end of segregation throughout America did not happen overnight. However, there was a point when someone said, we will integrate now, and moved forward from that point. Do we still see discrimination in the Army and in our country? Yes, but it is now illegal, both in the civilian sector and against the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Documents are changed to reflect the will of the American people and the needs of the Army. Women in the military was once taboo, but now there are discussions on whether women should be in combat units. Looking specifically at sexual harassment, the Army has cleaned up its image so much so that modern day Soldiers would be unable to pick up the cadence call if their

Noncommissioned Officer started off with the line; *The prettiest girl I ever saw, was sippin bourbon through a straw*. The Army has developed clear policies and procedures for dealing with these issues. Why has it not done so for the homosexuality issue?

The verdict of the American people is still out in regards to homosexuality. While no longer a crime in the United States, it is still against the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), but then so are other violations such as adultery. The reason these issues remain in the UCMJ is due to the affect they may have on good order and discipline. Some military members profess that it is the act of homosexuality, not the fact an individual is a homosexual that is against the UCMJ. In other words if you remain abstinent you are okay. To expect Soldiers to remain celibate during their entire enlistment, especially if they remain in the service for a 20-year career or more, is ridiculous. It should be noted that sodomy is against the UCMJ, to include oral sex even between married heterosexual partners, which we all know never happens.

The Army is big on meeting or exceeding **the standard**. Why then would sexual orientation have any bearing on whether a proven combat veteran with an exemplary service record makes a good Soldier? If an individual meets or exceeds all the standards and sets the example for others to emulate why should the Army care if they are gay? The answer is obviously that Army leaders do not care, hence the “Don’t Ask” part of the policy, which gives Army leadership the ability to look the other way when a Soldier meets the standard. This is still unethical in the manner it presents the issue to heterosexual members of the force and those Soldiers that believe the Army is against homosexuality.

The majority of the gay military members who have been separated from the Army for being gay generally fall into two categories. Soldiers that meet the Army standard and who have come forward stating they were gay in an effort to remove this unethical policy; and those who

were substandard Soldiers who probably should have been separated from the military under other Chapters, but who's command elected to separate due to homosexuality.

This issue is mainstream. The Army "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy is being parodied on such mainstream shows as *Boston Legal* and honestly examined on journalistic news programs like *60 Minutes*. "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," is more a political policy pushed on the military to avoid outraging voters than it is an Army initiative to keep gays out of the military. To tell a Soldier in an all-volunteer force you can join, fight, and die, but do not tell me if your gay is ethically unsound. With the upcoming elections, do not be surprised if there is an increase in gay Soldiers "coming out" in the next year to force politicians to make a choice and attempt to influence this unethical policy. "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is unethical, political, and needs to be seriously addressed by Army leadership to provide a clearer statement of where homosexuality ranks in keeping with Army Values.