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Disadvantages of Homosexuals in the Army

MCPO Jeff Patton

United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

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Abstract

The very nature of homosexuals serving in the Army has been an issue of hot debate throughout the history of the Army. Many think open homosexuality is incompatible to the Army way of life. Others think it is time to implement the policy of allowing open homosexuals to serve. Many things are at stake, such as unit moral, unit cohesion, and disharmony among soldiers. Other issues, such as the need to build our Army to higher numbers by allowing open homosexuals to serve, come into play as debate over the current policy. Public opinion also plays a major role in what government thinks should happen with the policy. This paper will focus on the disadvantages of homosexuals serving openly in the Army.

Disadvantages of Homosexuals in the Army

The question of allowing open homosexuality has plagued the Army since the beginning of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy in 1993. Webster’s New World Dictionary defines homosexuality as “of or having sexual desire for those of the same sex” (Webster’s, 1990). The topic of allowing open homosexuals in the Army has been an issue of much discussion within the political and Army circles. At the core of the subject is the conflict between societies changing views on the morality of homosexuality and the strict moral code and traditions observed by the military. People are a product of the society in which they live, and society has become less sensitive to open homosexuality.

A person’s sexual orientation is a morality issue that strikes deep into the heart of the Army’s core ethics and values. The resistance to homosexuals serving in the Army simply underlines the core values of Army society. The values and ethics instilled by the Army prohibit sexual relations between people of the same gender. Allowing gays to serve “out of the closet” will never be an acceptable option to the Army. However, gays may serve in the Army as long as they do not reveal their sexual orientation or participate in homosexual acts. This forces leaders and gay service members into an unhealthy situation that could ultimately interfere with morale of the unit. If members are suspected to be gay by their leaders and peers, it causes disharmony in the unit, interfering with morale and the overall good order and discipline of the unit. The suspected service member may feel they are being targeted and is unable to do their job effectively.

The Department of Defense Directive 1332.14 states “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 presence of such members adversely affects the ability of the armed forces to maintain discipline, good order, and morale.” (Ray, 1992). A striking conflict exists between the accepted moral standards of the Army and the views of society. An Army Times poll of Military member’s show that 75% still remain largely opposed to open homosexuality in the military while the American public is becoming more accepting of the idea.

Former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John M. Shalikashvili, said, “The concern among many in the military was that given the longstanding view that homosexuality was incompatible with service, letting people who were openly gay serve would lower morale, harm recruitment, and undermine unit cohesion” (Shalikashvili, 2007). Other nations are allowing open homosexuals to serve in their armed forces, but that does not mean the United States Army is ready to take that step. America must not allow public opinion or pressure from other nations to push them into accepting something that is unacceptable. America was founded on principles and Christian beliefs from the Holy Bible. Most Americans have at least a basic concept of the Bible and Christianity. This belief, or concept, instills in them that homosexuality is biblically wrong, making acceptance a hard pill to swallow. By allowing homosexuality to be accepted is one more step in putting aside what our nation was founded on.

Adding to the disadvantages of homosexuals serving openly in the Army is the issue of violence and retaliation of “straight” Soldiers against homosexual Soldiers. Homosexuals become targets of harassment or acts of violence if other service members in the organization perceive an intolerance of homosexuals by their command or peers. There have been many recorded cases of brutality against homosexual Soldiers and even murder. The Human Rights Watch publication reminds us of an unfortunate incident by stating “in 1999, homophobia led to

the murder of Army Private First Class Barry Winchell by a fellow soldier who beat him to death with a baseball bat” (Human Rights Watch, 2003). Understanding that there is never justification for these actions, they do exist and allowing open homosexuality in the Army could only exasperate these incidents.

In a professional organization such as the United States Army, there is little room for change to the elite cultural lifestyle that is lived within that organization. When men and women must go to war and put themselves in harms way, the elite attitude should not be compromised. World wide deployments put Soldiers living and working in close conditions which afford little privacy. All this relates to the simple fact that many Soldiers are very uncomfortable sharing these close working and living environments with those they know are homosexual. It goes against their moral beliefs and upbringing. These conditions are incompatible in either times of war or peace, but more detrimental in times of war.

Other issues arise that can counter the belief that homosexuals should not be allowed to openly serve. During this time of war when the Army has been stretched thin, should we welcome individuals who are willing and able to do the job, namely homosexuals? Should we lower the standards of Soldier’s beliefs? Would it really help or actually just hinder and cause more problems? These questions may best be left unanswered.

Conclusion

Disharmony among soldiers and degraded morale result from allowing homosexuals to serve openly in the United States Army, an undesirable situation in both wartime and peace. Throughout history, homosexuality has been frowned upon in the military. Shilts (1997) states “The first known case of a soldier being discharged from the U. S. Military for homosexual acts took place in 1778: Lt. Gotthold Frederick Enslin was court-martialed after being discovered in

bed with another soldier, and he was expelled from the Continental Army by order of Gen.

Washington” (p. 11). Throughout the years, the military maintained that homosexual status was grounds for separation. The lesson of history is that we don’t know where we are going unless we know where we have been. Let’s learn from this lesson and understand that what was good then, can still be good for now. As we try to change this policy, we are digging up a whole new can of worms. When the hands of time are turned ahead (allowing open homosexuals to openly serve in the Army) they may never turn back. America needs to be careful what it asks for. If it’s not broken, don’t fix it.

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