

# CHRISTIAN LIFE REPORT

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA BAPTIST CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMISSION

October/November/December 2010

VOL. 20 No. 4

## Homosexuals in the Military

by A. Eric Johnston

Local news reporting on the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy concerning homosexuals in the military have not adequately informed us on the issue. We must be extremely concerned about this very bold and unprecedented effort by the Obama Administration.

It has always been wise to have civilian oversight of the military. Leading military figures, such as General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who later became President of the United States, have been concerned about the development of a powerful military complex. However, we must not confuse the possible encroachment of the military into civilian life with the need to permit the military to regulate itself in matters related to combat readiness and efficiency. The military is for our national defense. It is not a proving ground for civilian social experiments.

Homosexuality has never been an accepted norm in a functioning culture. Homosexuality has always been viewed as abnormal and aberrant behavior destructive of the three institutions of a strong culture, *viz.*, the family, the church and the government. Obviously, a family must be constituted as a man and a woman who are able to procreate and provide for their children a lifestyle which will permit the family to carry on from generation to generation. For the western church, with its traditional Judeo-Christian substance found in the Holy Bible, homosexuality is viewed as a sin and an abomination, notwithstanding recent pro-homosexual policies of some mainline churches.

Understanding this background, we must view the efforts to permit open homosexuality in the military as a major step in the changing of America. We know that the Obama Administration is the most pro-abortion, big government, big spending administration that any of us have ever seen. His apologies to the world for America's strong Christian culture have embarrassed us. His unconcern for the military is highlighted by his efforts to change its very nature. Also, consider the dilemma this will cause Christian chaplains who view homosexuality as sin.

The positions of Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff are directly under the political control of the White House. Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Joint Chiefs Chairman Admiral Mike Mullen have, apparently, submitted to the will of the White House.

Directly reporting to them are the joint chiefs of the four branches of the military services. The joint chiefs have been more concerned with proper military protocol than social experiments. They have resisted the White House efforts to legalize and permit open homosexuality in the military.

The "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy was ushered in by Bill Clinton's Administration. It was an early effort to appease homosexuals. If their activity was not blatant, they would not be removed from the military. If it was, they would be dishonorably discharged.

The efforts in Congress to pass a bill to repeal that policy, which the President would be sure to sign, will permit open homosexuality at all levels. The joint chiefs, however, had asked for time to review the policy change. Without waiting for the military's assessment, the U.S. House of Representatives moved ahead with approving the policy. In other words, politically, they do not care what the military thinks.

An outspoken opponent of the change is retired Air Force General Charles Horner. A former fighter pilot, he said, "He supports the ban because he fears military readiness will suffer if open homosexuals are allowed to serve, particularly given the land forces, the way they have to live and operate." His concern is that living in confined quarters and under restrictive circumstances, the average serviceman, or woman, does not want to be subject to the affections of their fellow soldiers. Those who understand the homosexual lifestyle understand its promiscuous and permissive qualities. These have no place in the military.

We must continue to be concerned with the social abnormalities of the Obama Administration. We cannot wink at these significant changes. Please keep this in mind when you consider for whom you will vote in the coming general election. In the meantime, please communicate with your elected Representative and your two United States Senators in the Congress concerning your opposition to homosexuality in the military.

*(Johnston is president and general counsel for the Southeast Law Institute, Birmingham)*

*The articles in this issue were gathered from various sources  
The opinions in the Christian Life Report are not necessarily the opinions of the Christian Life Commission*

# Retired Chaplains Warn Against Reversing "Don't Ask"

By Michael Foust

With a vote pending in the House and Senate to reverse the military's ban on open homosexual service, a leading conservative group released new data asserting that closeted homosexuals in the military are three times more likely to commit sexual assaults than are heterosexuals.

The data by the Family Research Council (FRC) is based on the military's own numbers and it comes as the Senate Armed Services Committee prepares for a vote on an amendment that would overturn the ban.

FRC reviewed all 1,643 reports of sexual assault within the military for fiscal year 2009 (Oct. 1, 2008 through Sept. 30, 2009) and found that 8.2 percent of them were homosexual in nature, mostly male on male. Based on the assumption that 2.7 percent of the military is homosexual -- a stat derived from surveys of the general population -- FRC estimates that homosexuals are "about three times more likely to commit sexual assaults than heterosexuals are, relative to their numbers."

"If open homosexuality is permitted in the military, these numbers can only increase," FRC's Peter Sprigg said during a conference call with reporters. "The numbers of homosexuals in the military would grow, the threat of discharge for homosexual conduct would be eliminated, and protected class status for homosexuals would make victims hesitant to report assaults and make commanders hesitant to punish them for fear of appearing homophobic.

"Congress," he added, "should carefully consider these serious risks before taking any action to overturn the current law."

The Pentagon currently is studying the issue of openly homosexual service and getting feedback from military personnel and their families. It is scheduled to be finished in December. The proposal before the House and Senate would overturn the 1993 law that bans open homosexual service, but would do so only after the review is complete and if three leaders -- President Obama, Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Michael Mullen -- give the OK. All three are on record as opposing the 1993 law, so their approval is considered a foregone conclusion.

The House and Senate proposals would overturn the '93 law by amending the defense spending bill.

The amendment may now have the votes to pass the 28-member Senate committee, after Democratic Sen. Ben Nelson (Neb.) said he would vote for it. Democrats hold a 16-12 edge. The vote in the full House is too close to call. The amendment, Nelson said, "bases implementation of the repeal on the Pentagon's review and a determination by our military leaders." But Nelson's logic was criticized by Retired Army Lt. Col. Bob Maginnis, who supports the 1993 law.

"[The amendment] does not include voices of the ...

four chiefs of the services," he said, referencing the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, three of whom have expressed opposition to overturning the '93 law. "[W]e [also] need to understand what the American volunteer forces are saying on this particular issue, because if we don't want to have a crisis of retention and recruitment, you better listen to the American military."

Retired Marine Col. Richard Black said the ban on openly homosexual service makes common, practical sense. He and others say Congress should listen to retired personnel because current members of the military don't always have the freedom to speak out, partially because the '93 law is viewed as politically incorrect.

"It's a question of whether we will force soldiers to bond with homosexuals in the showers and the barracks, knowing that doing so will result in sexual bullying, male rape and forced sodomy," Black said on the conference call. "There's a reason we don't make men and women shower together, and for the same reason we must not force men to shower with homosexuals."

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, sent a letter to congressional leaders, saying "we urge opposition in the strongest possible terms" to the proposal. The letter was sent to Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sen. Carl Levin, D.-Mich., and Sen. John McCain, R.-Ariz., the ranking Republican, as well as to House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D.-Md., and House Minority Leader John Boehner, R.-Ohio.

"The military," Land wrote, "is a place where individuals are often required to be in intimate contact with each other for extended periods of time. The admission of openly homosexual individuals into the military would engender sexual tension and thereby negatively impact troop morale, unit cohesion, and order.... We are gravely concerned that the repeal of the 1993 law, commonly referred to as 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,' will result in the resignation of large numbers of personnel who are currently serving in our all-volunteer services, and that it will be extremely difficult to recruit their replacements."

If the amendments pass, Land said, then senators and representatives should vote against the overall defense spending bill.

"This is a critical issue not only for the overwhelming majority of Southern Baptists, but also for the future well-being of our military and ultimately our country. Please be advised that we will inform Southern Baptists on how members vote," Land wrote.

*(Foust is an assistant editor of Baptist Press)*

## VOTE NOVEMBER 2, 2010

You may say that your vote does not matter. It does and so do your prayers. The Christian's responsibility in the public square is to vote for people who best reflect biblical values. Pray first. Pray for the candidates. Pray for our government. Pray for God's will to be done in this election. Then vote. As citizens, it's your responsibility to get out and vote - vote your values - not because you're following the popular trend. If you are not registered, then do so. If you were not planning on voting, please cast your ballot guided by biblical principles. When people of faith realize the long-term implications of voting their values, our country will change for the better.



# "Don't Ask" - What's Really At Stake

by R. Albert Mohler, Jr.

Get ready. Big changes are coming to the United States military. Congress seems poised to pass legislation that would call for the elimination of the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy put in place in 1993. With the support of the Obama administration, and with Democratic majorities in both houses of Congress, it appears that the official normalization of homosexuality within the U.S. armed forces may take place sometime this year, after the completion of a Pentagon review.

Discharges from the U.S. armed forces for homosexual activity date back to the Revolutionary War, and until 1993 the services operated under a policy that identified homosexuality as "incompatible with military service."

"Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was a compromise policy put into place after newly elected President Bill Clinton failed to persuade Congress and the military command to lift all restrictions on the service of homosexuals in the armed forces. According to the policy, service personnel would not be asked about their sexual orientation, but if a homosexual orientation became a known issue, the individual could be discharged from the armed forces. From 1993 onward, homosexual activists have seen the removal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" as a major policy objective. Now, they are very close to seeing that objective realized.

Their efforts have been greatly assisted by a documented change in the public's understanding of the issue. Within a very short span of years, a massive shift in public attitudes has taken place. Though responses to the issue depend greatly upon how the question is asked, public opposition to the service of homosexuals in the military has clearly lessened. This shift is part of the larger transformation of moral values on issues of sexuality that has occurred over the past decade.

So, now that the full normalization of homosexuality in the U.S. military looms before us, are we ready for all that this means? Almost surely not.

There are huge realities that frame the momentous nature of this policy change. The first is the centrality of sexual identity or orientation to human life. The second is the massive institutional and symbolic influence of the military in American life. The third is the threat to religious liberty posed by the normalization of homosexuality in the armed forces.

## **THE CENTRALITY OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION -- 'OUT' MEANS 'OUT'**

On this point, the prophets of the sexual revolution were right: Sexual identity and orientation are central to an individual's sense of self and personhood, and to an individual's public persona. Historically, armies have dealt with this by normalizing heterosexuality and by doing everything possible to meld individuals into a unified fighting force. In this process of forming unit cohesion, individuals are to a great degree stripped of their personal identities in order to take on the singular identity of the unit.

Writing at the onset of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, John Luddy, a former Marine infantry officer, explained how this process works:

"Combat is a team endeavor. To win in combat, individuals

must be trained to subjugate their individual instinct for self-preservation to the needs of their unit. Since most people are not naturally inclined to do this, military training must break down an individual and recast him as part of a team. This is why recruits give up their first names and why they look, act, dress, and train alike. To paraphrase an old drill instructor, the Marine Corps is not Burger King -- you can't have it your way."

The normalization of homosexuality within the armed forces does not merely mean the fact that persons found to have a homosexual orientation will no longer be discharged from the military, it also means that something as central to human experience and identity as sexuality now complicates the situation. The presence of openly homosexual persons in military units, military housing, and military culture changes the very nature of unit cohesion. Beyond this, it changes the nature of the military as an institution. To all the complexities of breaking down individual identity in order to build a common identity, an inevitable focus on sexual orientation now reverses the entire logic.

The repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" does not in itself establish a comprehensive new policy. As James Dao of The New York Times reports, there are a host of "thorny issues" that must be decided:

"Will openly gay service members be placed in separate housing, as the commandant of the Marine Corps has advocated? What benefits, if any, will partners or spouses of homosexual service members be accorded? Will all military units be required to treat homosexuals the same? And what training will heterosexual officers and enlisted troops receive to prepare them to serve with openly gay soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines?"

These are but the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the "thorny issues" any new policy must regulate. The greatest challenge posed by the normalization of homosexuality within the armed forces is not the fact that homosexual persons will serve in uniform. Given the distribution of homosexuality within the population, we can be assured that the courageous service of homosexual persons has been the case from the beginning. The greatest challenge will be posed by the fact that the homosexuality will now be open, with all that means in terms of identification with homosexual culture and relationships. How do you redefine unit cohesion after that moral revolution?

## **THE U.S. MILITARY AND THE SHAPE OF AMERICAN CULTURE**

From the nation's birth, the armed forces have held an established place as a culture-forming institution. Our national life is shaped by several institutional forces, but few hold the power held by the U.S. military. The public's admiration of the armed forces is enhanced by the reality of civilian control over the military, and service in uniform has been an important means of establishing national identity and culture.

The results of this influence have been overwhelmingly positive. The successful racial integration of the military

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# "Don't Ask" - What's Really At Stake

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was indispensable to the civil rights movement. The military has preserved national values of honor, courage and service. Few institutions can compare to the massive influence of the military in shaping national culture.

That is why the normalization of homosexuality within the armed forces has been such a central goal of the homosexual movement. The three most significant institutional barriers to the full normalization of homosexuality in the society are the military, laws governing marriage, and the churches. For this reason, all three of these institutional forces have been directly targeted by those who would push for the full acceptance of homosexuality. A focus on these institutions is essential if homosexuality is to be recognized on an equal moral and cultural footing with heterosexuality. There is no surprise here.

It must be recognized that the normalization of homosexuality within the U.S. military will have effects far beyond the armed forces. The most immediate changes will appear closest to where the military is concentrated, both geographically and culturally. Businesses doing work for the armed forces, individuals offering housing and a host of services to military personnel, and others similarly connected to the armed services will be the first to be required to respond to these effects and to conform to the new military reality. From there, the circles of the military's influence will extend to the rest of the society in one manner or another.

The rejection of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy is not just about the military -- and that is why so much effort has been directed to its repeal.

## RELIGIOUS LIBERTY -- CONVICTION COLLIDES WITH THE NEW MILITARY CULTURE

Make no mistake: The repeal of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy will present a clear and present threat to the religious liberty of those who wear the American uniform, and especially to those who serve as chaplains.

The military serves under a clear set of rules and expectations. When homosexuality is normalized in the armed forces, an entire interconnected network of laws,

regulations, directives and policies will eventually shift as well. As those pushing for the normalization of homosexuality understand all too well, any policy that meets that objective will necessarily sanction personnel who do not conform to the new expectation. In other words, there will be an automatic reversal of the prevailing military logic on the question of homosexuality. At present, the armed forces operate under policies that identify open homosexuality as incompatible with military service. With a single stroke of legislation, that policy will not only be repealed, it will be reversed. Homosexuality will be transformed from something that is officially "incompatible with military service," to a reality that must be protected by rules and regulations about discrimination, advancement, promotion and military culture.

What will this mean for those in the armed forces who believe, based on their sincere religious convictions, that homosexuality is a sin? Advocating or articulating such a viewpoint will be contrary to the military's official stance and policy. Already, employees of many corporations in the civilian world complain about discrimination in promotion and career advancement if they do not, for example, agree to put a gay pride flag on their desk for Gay Pride Month. It is not that they refuse to work cooperatively with homosexual colleagues, but they cannot celebrate homosexuality itself. Just wait until this logic hits the military.

And what about military chaplains? What will they be allowed to say and teach about homosexuality? What do they do when, for example, a Christian soldier comes for counsel about his struggles with homosexual temptation? How can a chaplain wearing the uniform of the armed forces counsel that what the military says is normal and without moral significance is what the Bible nonetheless declares to be sin?

The religious liberties of millions of uniformed Americans will be put at immediate risk by the normalization of homosexuality in the military -- and these are the very people who are putting their lives on the line to preserve these liberties for others.

*(Mohler is president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary)*



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