

LETTERS

To the Editor—I can commiserate with the *JFQ* editor and staff, having served as editor of a professional military journal. We ran award-winning dialogue vetted out by review panels as well—sometimes to our chagrin. I received that same sad feeling reading Colonel Om Prakash's article on "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" ("The Efficacy of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,'" *JFQ* 55, 4th Quarter 2009). His assertion that everyone has just been emotional on this and it's time we just get over it is fundamentally flawed. He lists enough references to make an apple pie, but looking closely at his words reveals something we tried to avoid years ago in the professional journal of the Air Force: agendas.

He cites inconclusive scientific studies and notional opinion polls to support his "I see nothing here against repeal" thesis. Too bad that he won an award for this work and *JFQ* had to run it. To suggest the existence of a "gay gene" in a National Defense University (NDU) paper is remarkable in itself but fails to include relevant support from the American Psychological Association that says there is no proven genetic connection. The larger question is, what relevance is there to any unsupported assertions in advancing the professional military dialogue?

I served for nearly 29 years with many honorable and brave people who may have been homosexuals. I just didn't know who they were. I didn't have to spend 1 second wondering about whether the people next to me were actually interested in the mission. They were there because they cared about the mission, not themselves. They served with distinction. The military is supposed to fight and win our nation's wars. They fight as a team. I don't want any defender in the heat of battle to question the mission motivation of his wingman who demands to be self-identified by any individual, personal label. That detracts from the team. Regardless of your views on homosexuality, "Don't Ask Don't Tell" is *not* about sexual—but rather *is* about mission—orientation.

Call me emotional, but apparently articles advancing the subject of *mission* orientation are not similarly awarded these days in the halls of NDU. And if I was truly

a dedicated member of the profession of arms—and gay—I'd want no part of it. My service to country would never be about "me." Keep the current law; it supports the mission, *all* Servicemembers, and the warrior ethos. And it's working.

—Colonel James W. Spencer, USAF
(Ret.)
Past Editor, *Airpower Journal* (now
Air & Space Power Journal)

To the Editor—As Colonel Om Prakash's article on the efficacy of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" has been in the news, I would like to share with your readers some of the conclusions that I drew from my service on the 1993 Defense Readiness Council on Gays in the Military.

First, despite the colonel's comparison of 10 United States Code §654 with the integration of the Armed Forces in 1948, racism is *not* relevant to this issue. Similarly, this issue is *not* about sexual orientation; it is about personal conduct.

Second, in our discussions on the council, the Air Force was less concerned than the Army or Marine Corps, whose personnel fight for each other in combat units as intimate as the squad level. Each Service has a unique culture, and consequently the relative sensitivity to aspects of open homosexuality is uneven.

Third, this issue is complex because, like abortion, people are divided over the fundamentals of morality and social priorities. We must keep in mind that the military is a unique culture whose effectiveness is optimized through discipline and individual responsibility. Social issues are necessarily secondary to good order and discipline, and this critical context demands a different perspective than one that may be suitable for the civilian world.

—Lieutenant General Bill Ginn, USAF
(Ret.)
Former Commander,
U.S. Forces Japan and Fifth Air Force



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Strategic Forum 248

*Unity of Effort: Key to Success in
Afghanistan*

Christopher J. Lamb and Martin Cinnamond ascribe lack of progress in Afghanistan more to forces and donors working at cross-purposes than to insufficient resources. Calling for an indirect approach that emphasizes working through indigenous forces, the authors cite U.S. special operations forces (SOF) failure to support counterinsurgency objectives as an example of military units working at cross-purposes. They recommend three ways to improve unity of effort: all Operation *Enduring Freedom* forces (except SOF) should be merged into one common mission with international forces; decisionmaking authority between U.S. military and civilian leaders should be clarified; and SOF operations must focus on the indirect approach.