
Defense Report

AUSA



Lifting the Ban—Not Merely An Administrative Matter

As if the Army didn't have enough problems—ambiguous security threats, inadequate modernization funding, draconian budget cuts, massive strength reductions, personnel turbulence, base closures—it now faces myriad complex and disturbing issues emanating from the president's announced intent to lift the ban on homosexuals serving in the armed forces.

On the one hand, the practitioners of homosexuality characterize the issues as one of pure "equity," thus playing on the sympathies of all Americans who have a basic belief in fairness. The language of the discussion is equally misleading. If you have any questions about the issue you are labeled a "homophobe" and the exclusion policy is called "discrimination," evoking all the negative aspects of that word in relation to our racial history.

This issue is far more than a question of equity, and those who question the wisdom of admitting avowed homosexuals to military service do not necessarily "fear or hate homosexuals."

In the first place, the Army's purpose is to fight the nation's wars. It designs its personnel policies to provide the most effective force to achieve that end. This means there is differentiation from the start in selecting those who are best adapted to leadership and skill requirements as well as to the military environment. It is not a determination of individual worth but rather a selection to best fit Army needs.

Rather than an issue of simple equity, we are dealing with serious matters of privacy, superior/subordinate relations, standards of conduct, unit cohesion, public health, and interactions in small homogenous communities. It is a matter of dealing with a very fundamental human trait—sexuality—in the context of a very unique segment of society—the armed forces.

These are certainly not issues that should be decided by mere administrative directive, nor should they be imposed on the American public through the unique force of military law and discipline. The point being that changes, if they are to come, must have a basis in the greater society, must consider the unique characteristics of military service and must come through the full working of the democratic process.