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Commentary & Reply

David Wood

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Legitimate Debate, or Gay Propaganda?

To the Editor:

In an interview provided by a gay activist group, the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN), Aaron Belkin said he was surprised when *Parameters* elected to publish his article “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell: Is the Gay Ban Based on Military Necessity?” (Summer 2003).¹ I was surprised too—surprised that the Army War College’s respected journal would serve as a platform for a homosexual activist group spreading pure propaganda poorly disguised as legitimate research.

In his article, Belkin argued that our government and military should “have the integrity to admit that current American policy is based on prejudice, not on military necessity.”² As proof, he cited several studies conducted by an organization he leads, the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military (CSSMM). I hadn’t heard of it, so I looked it up (I wonder if *Parameters* did). At its website, one recognizes that CSSMM is a political action group, not an independent research organization.³ In the *Gay People’s Chronicle*, Belkin explains that CSSMM was founded in 1998 to combat claims that support the US ban on gays in the military and “for the purpose of defeating the Colin Powells of the world the next time the issue is brought before Congress.”⁴ Do Belkin’s statements suggest his research will be unbiased?

Belkin states that in case studies on homosexual military integration in Australia, Canada, Israel, and Britain, his organization interviewed “every identifiable pro-gay and anti-gay expert . . . in each country. . . including officers and enlisted personnel, ministry representatives, academics, veterans, politicians, and nongovernmental observers.” Surprisingly, according to his “research,” only 104 “experts” exist in these four countries and various fields. Even more surprising, apparently none of these experts, including the anti-gay ones, had an opinion in support of the gay ban worthy to be included in his “findings.”⁵

One of Belkin’s key arguments is that Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell (DADT) is based on anecdotes and misleading surveys instead of quantitative evidence. Belkin explained in other interviews: “There are two forms of data that Moskos [Professor Charles Moskos, author of DADT] and the right wing use to lie to Congress. One is that they use anecdotes, not evidence. Anecdotes can be used to show whatever you want as long as you pick the right anecdotes. . . . [And] they use statistical surveys of straight soldiers showing that they have a dislike of gay soldiers, which they translate into unit cohesion falling apart.”⁶ . . . “The generals lied to Congress in 1993 about unit cohesion.”⁷

Yet Belkin’s article is entirely anecdotal. It is nothing more than selected quotes from supposed experts who claim that homosexual integration has had no impact on unit cohesion or military readiness. A quick review of the author’s endnotes, cross-checked with an internet search, reveals the questionable credentials and political leanings of most of these experts. At one point, Belkin refers to a 1995 Canadian government report which supposedly indicates that lifting the

ban on gays in the military had “no effect.” However, his endnote does not cite the report but a “personal communication with Karol Wenek.”⁸

While Belkin condemns statistical surveys presented to Congress to support DADT, he has no problem arguing his case with a survey that he administered with a colleague to 194 combat soldiers.⁹ Belkin also claims that his political action group reviewed 622 documents and articles which “revealed no evidence that the lifting of the gay bans undermined military performance, led to difficulties in recruiting or retention, or increased the rate of HIV infection.”¹⁰ However, he fails to identify any of these documents and offers no specific data to back his claim. The data concerning HIV would be especially interesting considering that Britain did not lift its ban until 2000 and, unlike the United States, does not positively screen for HIV annually.

Belkin fails to offer any genuine evidence or quantitative data to support his claims because the data clearly support the military’s position that lifting the ban on homosexuality would significantly detract from combat readiness. Regardless of how one feels about the associated moral issues, the fact is that homosexuality involves an unhealthy, high-risk lifestyle that would potentially overwhelm the military’s limited healthcare system.

According to an Army survey, 80 percent of soldiers who tested positive for HIV admitted to contracting the virus through homosexual contact, and the actual percentage may be higher.¹¹ According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), homosexual men are a thousand times more likely to contract AIDS than the general male heterosexual population.¹² The carrier rate of hepatitis B among homosexuals is 20 to 50 times that of the general public.¹³ The *New England Journal of Medicine* reported that risk of anal cancer rises by an astounding 4,000 percent for those engaging in homosexual intercourse and doubles again for those who are HIV positive. An estimated 30 percent of all 20-year-old homosexual men will be HIV positive or dead by the age of 30.¹⁴ Evidence also shows that the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases within the homosexual community is growing. The CDC says cases of HIV among gay and bisexual men have risen nearly 18 percent over the last three years.¹⁵ Clearly, it is not in the best interest of the military to end its ban on homosexuality.

Belkin, his organization, and others like it are not really interested in a genuine study on the impact of homosexuality within the military, they are engaged in an intense information campaign to market, normalize, and legitimize the homosexual political agenda. This strategy, commonly referred to as “conversion,” involves flooding the marketplace of ideas with carefully crafted rhetoric to shape what society thinks. *Parameters* has helped Belkin legitimize his propaganda. According to the SLDN, Belkin touts that “he hasn’t gotten any negative reaction to his piece in the journal, which goes out to about 13,000 senior military leaders and political leaders, and that he has received positive letters from gay officers who were cheered by the result of his work.”¹⁶ The implication is that his arguments have proven irrefutable by military leaders.

According to SLDN, gay activists chose 2003 “to start a campaign against DADT.”¹⁷ They realize that future decisions concerning gays in the military will

be based on politics and emotion rather than facts. The 1974 decision of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) to remove homosexuality as a pathological psychiatric condition from the Diagnostic Statistical Manual was not based on new scientific findings but was the result of gay activism. As stated by gay-activist researcher Simon Levay, "Gay activism was clearly the force that propelled the APA to declassify homosexuality."¹⁸

It was political action, not military necessity, which led to Don't Ask, Don't Tell in 1993 when President Clinton fulfilled his campaign promise to the homosexual lobby, which had contributed more than \$3 million to his campaign.¹⁹ As Belkin points out in his article, Australia, Canada, Israel, and Britain lifted their gay bans, despite opposition from their military services, due to political action.²⁰ Today, many religious organizations are reversing their historic positions on homosexuality not due to divine revelation but rather due to gay activism. It's a battle for ideas, and while Belkin's CSSMM offers \$350 grants to faculty who are willing to promote the homosexual agenda in their syllabi,²¹ *Parameters* is willing to do it for free. Disappointing.

NOTES

1. Leah Etling, "Don't Ask Don't Tell: Attitudes Shifting on Gays in the Military," *Santa Barbara News-Press*, 19 July 2003; The Servicemembers Legal Defense Fund, Press Room, <http://www.sldn.org/templates/press/record.html?record=1034>.
2. Aaron Belkin, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell: Is the Gay Ban Based on Military Necessity?" *Parameters*, 33 (Summer 2003), 118.
3. Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military (CSSMM), <http://www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu>.
4. Eric Resnick, "Israeli Military Not Affected By Open Policy, Study Says," 7 July 2000, *Gay People's Chronicle – Lead News Stories*, <http://www.gaypeopleschronicle.com/stories/00jul7.htm>.
5. Belkin, pp. 109-10.
6. Etling.
7. Resnick.
8. Belkin, pp. 111, 118.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
11. D. J. Pollock, "US Department of Defense Policy on Homosexuality in the Armed Forces: Military Necessity or Unfair Discrimination?" MMS thesis (Quantico, Va.: Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 1993).
12. US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control, National Center for Infectious Diseases, Division of HIV/AIDS, *The HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report*, December 2001.
13. Barney R. Barendse, "Health Risk of Homosexual Lifestyle in the Military," MMS thesis (Quantico, Va.: Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 1993).
14. Focus on the Family, CitizenLink, "Straight Answers: Exposing the Myths and Facts about Homosexuality," <http://www.family.org/cforum/fosi/homosexuality/maf/a0028248.cfm>.
15. Ed Vitaglian, "Sexual Suicide," *American Family Association Journal*, September 2003.
16. Etling.
17. *Ibid.*
18. A. Dean Byrd, et al., "The Innate-Immutable Argument Finds No Basis in Science," National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuals (NARTH), <http://www.narth.com/docs/innate.html>.
19. Steven C. Shultis, "The Corps and the Homosexual: A Time for Campaigning and Moral Courage," MMS thesis (Quantico, Va.: Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 1993).
20. Belkin, p. 109.
21. See the CSSMM website "Fellowship" link.

Major Joseph A. Craft, USMC
Quantico, Virginia