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Commentary & Reply

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The Author Replies:

Major Craft frames my research as propaganda and implies that anyone who agrees with me is being manipulated by the gay lobby. Even if this were true, Craft does not show that lifting the gay ban would undermine readiness. And, when one realizes that Craft's accusations about my scholarship are, at best, without merit, his failure to engage in honest debate becomes even more apparent. To save space, the editors asked me not to use footnotes, but I have posted documentation for this reply at www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu.

Craft asserts that "lifting the ban on homosexuality would significantly detract from combat readiness." But why, if allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly undermines readiness, hasn't anyone been able to identify a single military whose effectiveness deteriorated after the elimination of a ban? To the contrary, US officials praise the performance of Britain and other coalition partners. Scholars at RAND and PERSEREC (the Personnel Security Research and Evaluation Center) have concluded that eliminating the ban would not undermine readiness. Admiral John Hutson, former Navy JAG, says that the ban is a failed policy that undermines the military, and General Wesley Clark, USA Ret., says the ban does not work. During the first Gulf War, the ban was suspended via a stop-loss order without any apparent impact on readiness. Military leaders know that gays don't undermine readiness, or they would never suspend the ban during war.

Major Craft claims that because gay service members are likely to contract HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), lifting the ban would "overwhelm the military's limited health care system." But many thousands of gays already serve without overwhelming the system, and lifting the ban will not increase their numbers significantly. Currently, approximately 1,000 service members are HIV-positive (.07 percent of the force) and all personnel are screened for HIV prior to accession and frequently thereafter. There is no evidence that the health care systems of any of the 24 foreign militaries that have lifted their bans have been overwhelmed or that rates of HIV or other STDs increased as a result of integration.

According to Craft, gays live "unhealthy, high-risk" lifestyles. But DOD reports that 41.8 percent of service members engage in binge drinking, 17.9 percent ride motorcycles without wearing a helmet, and 57.9 percent of those who are unmarried and sexually active did not use condoms during their last sexual encounter, a troubling finding given our history in places like Olongapo. Sound public policy would address risky behavior as a service-wide problem rather than singling out gays.

While Major Craft invents imagined costs he asserts would result from lifting the ban, even though no organizations that lifted bans experienced such problems, he ignores actual costs the Pentagon must pay to sustain Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT). These include wasted money and talent and embarrassing media coverage that sometimes puzzles the American public, 79 percent of which believes that gays should be allowed to serve openly according to a December 2003 Gallup poll.

As to Craft's charges that my methodology and evidence are flawed, respected, mainstream social scientists see things differently; my work on gays in the

military appears in highly regarded, peer-review journals such as *International Security* and *Armed Forces and Society*, which are neither liberal nor pro-gay, and which do not publish research based on flimsy methodology or data.

Craft questions a passage in which I wrote, “A 1995 internal report from the Canadian government on the lifting of the ban concluded, ‘Despite all the anxiety that existed through the late 80s into the early 90s about the change in policy, here’s what the indicators show—no effect.’” The supporting footnote cites a “Personal communication with Karol Wenek, Directorate of Policy Analysis and Development, Canadian Forces, 20 January 2000.” I cited Wenek rather than the document (“Briefing Note for Director of Public Policy,” Ottawa, Canadian Forces, 25 August 1995), because the *Parameters* quote was Wenek’s description of the report’s conclusion.

My research for the *Parameters* article consisted of extensive literature reviews and interviews of officers and enlisted personnel, ministry representatives, academics, veterans, politicians, and nongovernmental observers (the latter group included activists). Craft questions my decision to interview activists, but consider how vigilantly women’s groups monitor the US military for trouble. My colleagues and I included activists among our interviewees because they are among the most likely to know whether integration caused problems in their countries.

Major Craft finds it “surprising [that] apparently none of the experts, including the anti-gay ones, had an opinion in support of the gay ban worthy to be included in [my] findings.” But none reported that readiness suffered as a result of integration. Consider, for example, Professor Christopher Dandeker, former Chair of War Studies at Kings College London and perhaps the most distinguished scholar of the British military. In 1999, Dandeker wrote that if Britain lifted its ban, readiness would deteriorate. After British policy changed, Dandeker concluded that his prediction had been incorrect.

Craft claims I did not interview all possible experts, and says my article “fails to identify any . . . documents and offers no specific data.” But *Parameters* does not allow authors to publish complete bibliographies. I invite anyone interested in my source lists to consult the extensive reference sections of studies listed in endnote 6 of the article. As those studies explain in detail, my colleagues and I used standard social scientific practices to ensure that our search for documents and experts was thorough.

Finally, Craft mischaracterizes my position on anecdotes and statistics. Anecdotes are useful when they illustrate trends. But even a large number of anecdotes featuring red-haired soldiers who undermine readiness would not demonstrate that red-haired soldiers undermine readiness *on average*. The dishonesty of the 1993 congressional hearings was not the inclusion of anecdotes about gay service members who undermined readiness, but the failure to determine whether those anecdotes represented overall trends. By contrast, when the totality of experts on a particular military testifies that there is no indication that lifting a ban undermined readiness, that is not anecdotal evidence.

I would welcome the opportunity to analyze the unit cohesion rationale statistically, and I requested permission to conduct such a study. The Pentagon

declined to cooperate, and its refusal, which I'll share with interested readers, is fascinating. My complaint about surveys used to justify DADT is not that they are statistical, but that heterosexual dislike of gays is not evidence that lifting the ban would undermine readiness. For example, 66 percent of male British service members said they would not serve with gays if Britain's ban was lifted, but ultimately the policy transition proved unproblematic.

What about personal and political bias? Perhaps the most important distinction between honest scholarship and propaganda turns on a commitment to report embarrassing findings, to avoid reaching conclusions prior to examining the evidence, and to change one's mind when data contradict original expectations. My institute's staff and I always report findings that do not confirm our expectations or beliefs (see, for example, the third case of "Multinational Military Units" at www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu), which is why Charles Moskos, architect of DADT, wrote in an email that my scholarship is "reflective of integrity and honesty." When I asked Moskos for permission to use the quote in this essay, he responded, "Aaron, absolutely. Moreover, I have mentioned to many others that your reporting facts not supportive of your position is more remarkable and rare."

While my passion for research derives in part from a desire to hold experts who fail to tell the truth accountable, my research conclusions follow from evidence, not from personal beliefs. If Craft or others can identify foreign militaries whose effectiveness deteriorated or whose health care systems were overwhelmed as a result of eliminating a ban, I will modify my views accordingly. (My institute will entertain fellowship applications for this research, as always, in good faith.)

The difference between Major Craft and me is not that one of us is political while the other is devoted to fact, but that I examine all available data to determine whether the costs of the ban outweigh its benefits, and remain open to changing my views if the evidence warrants, while Craft actively seeks data, sometimes from dubious sources, and ignores other evidence, to justify his predetermined position. As I argued in my *Parameters* article, the gay ban is based on prejudice, not concerns about readiness, and prejudice tends to defy reasoned deliberation.

Aaron Belkin

Commentary & Reply Submissions

We invite reader commentaries of up to 1,000 words on articles appearing in *Parameters*. Not all commentaries can be published. For those that are, the author of the article will be invited to provide a reply. Commentaries may be edited to meet style and space constraints. Send to US Army War College, ATTN: *Parameters*, 122 Forbes Ave., Carlisle, PA 17013, or by e-mail to Parameters@carlisle.army.mil.
