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**MARINE CHIEF PLEDGES SEPARATE FACILITIES WHEN GAY BAN ENDS**  
*Experts on Both Sides of Debate Say Separate Facilities Would Undermine Cohesion*

SANTA BARBARA, CA, March 26, 2010 -- Military experts today expressed concern about Marine Commandant General James Conway's remarks that he would build new quarters to separate gay and straight troops. Many said his plans could cause the very problems he seeks to prevent. Gen. Conway, who previously expressed resistance to lifting the ban on openly gay service, offered his remarks yesterday in an interview with [Military.com](http://Military.com). He said that "I would not ask our Marines to live with someone who is homosexual if we can possibly avoid it. And to me that means we have to build BEQs [bachelor enlisted quarters] and have single rooms."

Richard H. Kohn, a prominent military historian who was faculty at the Army and National War Colleges, and was Chief of Air Force History for the U.S. Air Force, said that "segregating Marines, as Gen. Conway envisions, might undermine the very cohesion he and other opponents of change say they are trying to protect." Kohn said that "the proper response to a question on the issue is to defer any statement until the Ham-Johnson group reports," referring to the year-long Pentagon Working Group. Kohn is currently Professor of History and Adjunct Professor of Peace, War, and Defense at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Retired Marine General Carl Mundy, one of Conway's predecessors as Commandant of the U.S Marine Corps, opposes openly gay service, but recently said that if repeal is going to happen, "the easiest way to deal with it is to make it as simple as possible. The last thing you even want to think about is creating separate facilities or separate groups or separate meeting places or having four kinds of showers — one of straight women, lesbians, straight men and gay men. That would be absolutely disastrous in the armed forces. It would destroy any sense of cohesion or teamwork or good order and discipline."

Other top generals have noted that uniformity is what's needed for this policy change, and that divided leadership and separate rules or facilities will make the transition harder, not easier. In a 2009 op-ed in the *Washington Post*, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. John Shalikashvili, said mixed



messages from leadership could be toxic, and that it was crucial for top leaders to communicate consistent signals that the force is capable of carrying out new orders. “Given the inevitability of change,” he wrote, “it will be important for senior leaders to send clear signals of support to the rank and file. Every general officer knows that mixed signals undermine leadership. Indeed, studies show that when organizations implement controversial change, signals from the top must be clear.” Gen. Shalikhshvili wrote that when senior officers oppose the inevitable, their messages “could cause the very disruptions they predict.”

When Secretary Gates announced the Pentagon’s review in February, he asked that political divisiveness be kept out of the debate: “I expect that the same sharp divisions that characterize the debate over these issues outside of the military will quickly seek to find their way into this process, particularly as it pertains to what are the true views and attitudes of our troops and their families,” Gates said, calling for the process to be carried out with “minimal influence by the policy or political debate.”

According to Retired Rear Admiral Al Steinman, formerly the top-ranked doctor in the Coast Guard, existing rules and regulations regarding “incompatible” roommates already allow unit commanders to deal with problems between roommates, gay or straight. “There is no need to create special regulations that apply only because gay Marines are allowed to be honest about who they are,” said Steinman. He added that “there are already known gay Marines serving in both theaters of war, with the knowledge of their peers and sometimes even of their commands. That means known gays are already sharing berthing spaces aboard ships, latrines, showers, tents, hooches and every other facility with their straight fellow Marines, and it isn’t proving to be a problem.”

Lawrence Korb, a former Assistant Secretary of Defense under President Reagan and currently a Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress, which just released a report on how to end “don’t ask, don’t tell,” said other countries had no problems with openly gay service. “We went into the British and French experience and looked at separate facilities and separate showers, and they don’t have a problem,” Korb told [Military.com](http://Military.com). “They’ve not changed their policies from before.”

Nathaniel Frank, Senior Research Fellow at the Palm Center, said Conway’s plan is inconsistent with research on gays in the military. “Decades of research, including all of the conclusions of the 1993 RAND study, shows that separating gays and straights is a bad idea,” he said. “RAND found that creating policies that are applied only to one group of people or to accommodate the prejudices of another group of people only undercut the larger mission of a unified, integrated force.”



Air Force Captain Diane Mazur, Legal Co-Director at Palm and a law professor at University of Florida Levin College of Law, decried Conway’s plans. “Unfortunately, any discussion of ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ seems to lead some officers to forget their professional and constitutional obligations as military officers,” she said. “We live under a system of civilian control of the military in which we make decisions based on fact and law, not on the personal objections of individual officers. This is insubordination, plain and simple.” Aaron Belkin, Director of the Palm Center, added that he would expect “significant Congressional opposition” to any plan that implied a separate-but-equal standard.

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The Palm Center is a think tank at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Since 1998, the Center has been a leader in commissioning and disseminating research in the areas of gender, sexuality, and the military. For more information visit [www.palmcenter.ucsb.edu](http://www.palmcenter.ucsb.edu).