

Letter to the Editor

Misperceptions surround DADT

It might surprise those of you who have little experience with the military, but the military is a very large collection of individuals. And while many of them did lament the passing of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT), many of them were enthusiastic, and still others marked it with a very unenthusiastic "whatever." Yet, Wiley Robinson in his Sept. 23 Beacon article, asserted that "the military" put DADT in place to persecute homosexuals, completely discounting Admiral Mike Mullen, the current Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and one of the key voices advocating against DADT. Before I begin to lay out why I support DADT, let me begin by asserting something exceedingly rare in these types of discussions — facts. DADT did not stop homosexuals from serving in the United States Military; rather, it allowed them to serve. Before the implementation of DADT, homosexuals were not allowed in the military at all. In fact, DADT forbade my chain of command from asking anyone else I served with if they were a homosexual. This was the source of the outrage at the onset of DADT.

If DADT does not exist to persecute homosexuals, then why does it exist? On the battlefield there can be no allegiances superior to those you have to the man on your left and on your right; from my first day in the Marines it was made clear to me that the men beside me were more important than my mother and father, my girlfriend and every other relationship I had ever had. And they were. My mother and father, girlfriend, grandparents or friends couldn't save me once we were under fire; only my brothers could. What's more, there is no room for dissension — or, more importantly, legitimate reasons for dissension; and there is no room for factions. All attention must be focused on the task at hand; the price for failures or mistakes is death. And it is for this reason that there is no room for romantic entanglements; whether homosexual or heterosexual.

Women are not allowed to serve in combat arms units, so laws prohibiting fraternization between men and women, in these units at least, are unnecessary; but in units where women are allowed these laws are in force, and ignored. As a result, there is much speculation as to how certain leaders got and maintain their positions; and it is all but fatal to morale. Men are allowed to serve in combat arms units, so the repeal of DADT exposes them to this very real risk of dissension and faction.

So, that is my case for DADT; but now I would like to get on to the inspiration for this article. In his article, Robinson asserts that "99.9 percent of the folks we killed over there" are innocent. How dare you, sir? Have you ever had to look any of those people in the eye? Have you eaten food they graciously and enthusiastically prepared for you — when they barely have enough for themselves? Let's again revert to facts to make the case. We are not the ones intentionally targeting innocents over there; the terrorists are. Have you missed the countless news stories to that effect? I have fought these people and I tell that they do not hold life in the same regard we do. They callously and regularly use drug addicts, the mentally handicapped, women and children as the pawns of their games; they attack schools, torture fathers and sons to death and decapitate journalists. I will not make the case that no innocents are dead at our hands; recent events speak to the opposite. Rather, I make the case that these incidents are either unintentional, collateral damage or isolated incidents.

But we didn't just leave those poor people out of the fight; whenever possible, we helped them. We built schools and water treatment plants, treated the sick, fed the hungry and clothed the naked. Americans have no reason to be ashamed of the actions of their government in the wars in either Iraq or Afghanistan; our men and women in uniform have comported themselves with no small measures of valor and kindness. Furthermore, we did not invade Iraq "for its resources." We invaded to prevent Saddam Hussein from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, which he used on the Kurds in the '90s and which his top generals and staff testified he moved to Syria.

It is always odd to me that these kinds of articles are written about the military by people who have enjoyed the protection of the military. Because of our military, the wars that wage in our enemies' backyards are not waging in our own. We do not have to listen to the anguished screams of mothers as they look on the bodies of their children. There is no risk that we will be captured off of Cumberland, taken to a plastic lined room and beheaded. And this is all thanks to the military. So, please show some respect; or at the very least, don't take cheap shots at the people who keep you safe.

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