



FACT SHEET

ABOUT DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE-COMMISSIONED REPORTS

Over the years, the military has used different policy rationale from national security to unit cohesion in order to defend its discriminatory treatment of gays and lesbians. While the reasons may have changed, the research has not. For more than a half-century, studies commissioned and funded by the Pentagon have directly challenged the Department's own policy rationale. The studies have consistently shown that the presence of gays and lesbians in the Armed Forces does not jeopardize national security, that homosexual members are as fit to serve in the military as heterosexuals, and that openly gay troops could be successfully integrated into the military.

I. Crittenden (1957)

A Navy study, popularly referred to as the Crittenden Report, concluded as early as “1957 that homosexual service members did not pose a greater security risk than heterosexual personnel.”¹ The Secretary of the Navy appointed a board to evaluate the Navy's policies and procedures governing homosexual service members. No major changes were recommended, in part because of the military's reluctance to “liberalize standards ahead of the civilian climate.”²

The findings did acknowledge that many more homosexuals were likely serving in the Armed Forces than the small number that had been involuntarily discharged. The report noted that “there have been many known instances of individuals who have served honorably and well, despite being exclusively homosexual.”³

The board also found no factual data to support the premise that homosexual service members “necessarily” posed a security risk. Research indicated that factors unrelated to sexual orientation constituted security risks and that the type of sexual activity mattered less than the “matter of indiscretion.” “According to the report, intelligence officers sometimes considered heterosexual relations more of a security threat than homosexual conduct.”

II. PERSEREC (1988-89)

Thirty years after the Crittenden Report was completed, the Defense Department commissioned a study on conditions related to trust violations, including drug abuse, credit history, and homosexuality. The Defense Personnel Security Research and Education Center (PERSEREC) prepared two reports which examined whether gay, lesbian and bisexual service members posed security risks or were otherwise unsuitable for service. “The first report, released in December 1988, confirmed the Crittenden findings and found no data to support the ban on gays in the military.”⁴ The results were quickly swept aside in a wave of criticism from the Pentagon. In a memo to PERSEREC's director, then-Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Craig Alderman, Jr. accused the center of exceeding its authority and called the research

¹ *Report of the Board of Appointed to Prepare and Submit Recommendations to the Secretary of the Navy for the Revision of Policies, Procedures and Directives Dealing with Homosexuality* (Mar. 15, 1957).

² *Id.* at 3.

³ *Id.* at 5.

⁴ Theodore R. Sarbin, Ph.D & Kenneth E. Karols, M.D., Ph.D, Defense Personnel Security Research and Education Center, *Nonconforming Sexual Orientation and Military Suitability* (Dec. 1988).



flawed.⁵ PERSEREC issued a second report in January 1999, which further challenged the rationale that homosexuals were unsuitable for service.⁶

“The findings of both PERSEREC reports were not favorable to the Department of Defense policy position that homosexuality was incompatible with military service.” The research encompassed a review of legal trends, scientific studies, and social and cultural developments. Authors of the first report concluded that security concerns had been exaggerated and noted that decriminalizing homosexual conduct in civilian society had “done much to decrease the danger of blackmail.”⁷

The report states, “It is difficult not to conclude that a large number of undetected homosexual men and women are performing their military roles satisfactorily and that their sexual conduct does not come to the attention of their commanders.”⁸

Discharge numbers suggested that many gay and lesbian service members were not classified as security risks during their clearance investigations. In fact, approximately half of service members discharged for homosexuality between 1981 and 1987 held Top Secret or Secret security clearances.

The report also compared the discrimination against homosexuals to the experience of African-American service members before the military branches were integrated. The report states: “It would be wise to consider applying the experience of the past 40 years to the integration of homosexuals.”⁹ The researchers noted that officials had similarly predicted that racial integration of the troops would disrupt troop morale and discipline predictions that failed come true.

The PERSEREC was the first report to question the military’s ability to continue to isolate itself from changing social attitudes taking hold elsewhere in the nation and the world.

PERSEREC’s second study looked for connections between sexual orientation and suitability of service by comparing data on discharges for homosexuality and unsuitability. “According to the findings, gay service members fared better than their heterosexual counterparts in most areas of adjustment, including school behavior and cognitive ability.” The report noted: “These results appear to be in conflict with conceptions of homosexuals as unstable, maladjusted persons.”¹⁰ In the aftermath of the first report’s release, the second report was never submitted to the Pentagon.¹¹

⁵ Memorandum from Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Craig Alderman, Jr. to PERSEREC Director (Jan. 18, 1989), in *Gays in Uniform: The Pentagon’s Secret Reports* 101 (Kate Dyer ed. 1990).

⁶ Michael A. McDaniel, Defense Personnel Security Research and Education Center, *Preservice Adjustment of Homosexual and Heterosexual Military Accessions: Implications for Security Clearance Suitability* (Jan. 1989)

⁷ Sarbin & Karols, *supra* note 4, at 29.

⁸ *Id.* at 22.

⁹ *Id.* at 25.

¹⁰ McDaniel, *supra* note 6 at 21.

¹¹ *Gays in Uniform: The Pentagon’s Secret Reports* xvii (Kate Dyer ed. 1990).



III. RAND (1993)

In 1993, then-Secretary of Defense Les Aspin commissioned a study by RAND's National Defense Research Institute in conjunction with a presidential memorandum calling for an end to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the military. President Clinton's memo called for a policy that was "practical," "realistic," and "consistent with high standards of combat effectiveness and unit cohesion."¹² The resulting RAND report identified a single policy option that could meet President Clinton's guidelines – a policy based on clear standards of conduct equally applied to all military personnel.¹³

The report proposed a 'Standard of Professional Conduct' as a workable replacement for the ban on gays serving in the military. Such a standard would address unfair discrimination and privacy concerns by prohibiting inappropriate conduct from any service member. RAND's recommended single standard of conduct did not require a significant overhaul of then-existing regulations, the report notes. However, the researchers did recommend that private, sexual activity between consenting adults be decriminalized.

Researchers at RAND took a multi-dimensional approach to their task. First, they studied "analogous institutions and experiences." Analogous institutions included foreign militaries and domestic fire and police departments that prohibited anti-gay discrimination. The history of racial integration in the U.S. military was examined as an analogous experience. "Second, they considered public opinion both within and without the Armed Forces. Both the foreign militaries and the local fire and police agencies reported few problems caused by the presence of openly-gay members. The report noted that leaders from the foreign militaries surveyed did not believe that their organizational effectiveness had been compromised by their policies." Despite opposition, the report concluded that strong leadership and a clear commitment permitted the successful racial integration of the United States military in the 1940s. Furthermore, "the researchers found that public opinion in the early 1990s was more supportive of allowing gays and lesbians to serve than public opinion favorable to racial integration in the 1940s."

¹² RAND Corp., *Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy: Options and Assessment*, National Defense Research Institute (1993).

¹³ *Id.*