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## **Multinational Military Units and Homosexual Personnel**

A report commissioned by the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military,  
University of California, Santa Barbara

by

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## Introduction

The United States remains one of several NATO-member countries that bans gays and lesbians who acknowledge their sexual orientation from serving in the military. In 1993, when President Bill Clinton attempted to compel the Pentagon to lift its gay ban, military and Congressional leaders responded that unit cohesion would suffer if the armed forces allowed gay and lesbian personnel to acknowledge their sexuality. They reasoned that if gays were allowed to serve openly, military units would no longer be able to function effectively in combat. According to their arguments, heterosexual service personnel would not willingly trust gay peers with their lives, and such discomfort and distrust would undermine unit cohesion.<sup>1</sup> The subsequent compromise between the White House, the military and Congress is known as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” a policy which was designed to allow gays and lesbians to serve in the armed forces as long as they refrained from self-identifying as homosexuals.

Despite the importance of the unit cohesion rationale as the official justification for the Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell policy, there has been no direct test of its plausibility.<sup>2</sup> Several scholarly studies have addressed the theoretical foundation of the unit cohesion rationale, and others have analyzed the experiences of foreign militaries that have lifted their gay bans.<sup>3</sup> Despite these studies, however, the Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell policy itself has made it impossible to study the plausibility of the unit cohesion rationale directly, in the context of heterosexual American military personnel who serve alongside gay and lesbian peers. Because American gay and lesbian service members cannot reveal their sexual orientation to peers or to scholars, such an analysis is not possible.

One empirical context that allows a more direct examination of the plausibility of the unit cohesion rationale, however, is multinational military units that include openly gay personnel from foreign armed forces who serve alongside Americans. As multinational military operations have become more common, it has become possible to ask whether and how U.S. personnel might be affected by the presence of acknowledged homosexual service members from other countries. An examination of multinational military units may be the most direct option for assessing the plausibility of the unit cohesion rationale.

This study begins by describing various settings in which U.S. personnel serve with non-U.S. personnel in multinational units. Then, it explores the official and unofficial policies and administrative mechanisms that organizations such as NATO and

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<sup>1</sup> Ronald D. Ray, *Military Necessity and Homosexuality* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey’s, 1993), 63-67; and William Daryl Henderson, *Cohesion: The Human Element in Combat* (Washington, D.C.: National Defence University Press, 1985).

<sup>2</sup> 10 United States Code 654 (1993).

<sup>3</sup> On theoretical foundations of the unit cohesion rationale, see Elizabeth Kier, “Homosexuals in the U.S. Military: Open Integration and Combat Effectiveness,” *International Security* 23 (1998) and Robert J. MacCoun, “Sexual Orientation and Military Cohesion: A Critical Review of the Evidence,” in *Out in Force Sexual Orientation and the Military*, ed. Gregory M. Herek, Jared B. Jobe, and Ralph M. Carney (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996), 157-176; Aaron Belkin and Geoffrey Bateman, eds., *Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell: Debating the Gay Ban in the Military* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003). On foreign militaries, see Aaron Belkin and Melissa Levitt, “Homosexuality and the Israel Defense Forces: Did Lifting the Gay Ban Undermine Military Performance?” *Armed Forces and Society* 27 (2001): 541-566; Aaron Belkin and Jason McNichol, “Homosexual Personnel Policy of the Canadian Forces: Did Lifting the Ban Undermine Military Performance?” *International Journal* 56 (2001): 73-88.

the United Nations have put into place to monitor differences in personnel policies among member nations. The study then presents five case studies of gay non-American service members who served with Americans in multinational military units or operations. Finally, a conclusion summarizes key findings.

The study's primary conclusion is that the presence of acknowledged gay service members does not compromise unit cohesion or operational effectiveness in multinational military units. American personnel are able to interact with and work successfully with acknowledged gay personnel from foreign militaries. When occasional conflicts do arise, they tend to be minor and to be resolved successfully in an informal manner. On an institutional level, the study also finds that neither NATO nor the United Nations has addressed the coordination of divergent policies concerning sexual orientation in an official manner, largely because these organizations are preoccupied with more pressing concerns, and because homosexual personnel are not seen as sources of tension, even for U.S. personnel.

### **Methodology**

The first phase of the study involved collecting all relevant information on multinational military operations, which was systemically gathered from publicly available primary and secondary sources. All prior research materials relevant to multinational forces and sexual orientation by governmental, academic, and policy-focused organizations was identified, retrieved and analyzed (n=53).<sup>4</sup> Lexis/Nexis search retrievals for all news articles and wire service dispatches relating to homosexuality and multinational forces were analyzed (n=9). Major academic, non-governmental and military officials familiar with gay military issues and multinational operations (n=16) were identified through snowball sampling and interviewed.

The second phase of this study involved identifying and interviewing openly gay, non-U.S. service members who served in some capacity with U.S. personnel. Interviewees were identified through an extensive outreach effort, which involved using well-established networks of military scholars, government officials, and nongovernmental organizations to recruit openly gay non-U.S. personnel to be interviewed (n=5). Once these individuals were identified, they were interviewed carefully to maximize breadth of evidence and minimize bias. The study authors provided multiple opportunities for personnel to remain anonymous or go "off record" to encourage full disclosure; interviews were conducted privately over the telephone with all but one subject, avoiding social pressures common in focus groups; the value of accurate

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<sup>4</sup> Prior to this study, no scholarly research has been done on homosexuality and multinational forces. However, scholars have studied cultural diversity in multinational forces. For examples, see Efrat Elron, Boas Shamir, and Eyal Ben-Ari, "Why Don't They Fight Each Other? Cultural Diversity and Operational Unity in Multinational Forces," *Armed Forces and Society* 26 (1999): 73-97; Efrat Elron, et al., "Cooperation and Coordination Across Cultures in the Peacekeeping Forces: Individual and Organizational Integrating Mechanisms," in *The Psychology of the Peacekeeper*, eds. A. Adler and T. Britt (Prager Press: in press); and Joseph L. Soeters and Ricardo Recht, "Convergence or Divergence in the Multinational Classroom? Experiences from the Military," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 25 (2001): 423-440. For an example of the literature on cultural diversity and multinational organization, see Donald Hambrick, et al., "When Groups Consist of Multiple Nationalities: Towards a New Understanding of the Implications," *Organizational Studies* 19 (1998): 181-205.

and comprehensive responses was emphasized; subjects were encouraged to have colleagues with differing views or experiences contact the study authors on conditions of anonymity if preferred; and interviews were solicited with informed observers to corroborate findings and advise the study authors of potential sources of bias.

After these initial interviews were conducted, substantial efforts were made to locate and identify all U.S. personnel who worked with interviewees (n=7). Unfortunately, no U.S. personnel were interviewed for this study. Five were unable to be located, due to security restrictions imposed by the war on terror. The two who were located declined to be interviewed. Other difficulties were faced in identifying potential U.S. personnel to be interviewed. For example, one gay service member could not release his colleagues' names because of the classified nature of his work.

This study relies on a multi-method approach to compare and synthesize evidence from a number of different sources to draw conclusions. Whenever possible, independent observations from multiple sources are compared to draw out common findings that are consistent among observers in different sectors. During the interview process, the study authors also sought to ensure the broadest number of sources by repeatedly asking experts from different sectors for recommendations of additional sources of information.

### **Multinational military units: a brief survey**

Since the end of the Cold War, multinational force deployment has become an increasingly common and important strategy for international military and peacekeeping interventions.<sup>5</sup> Historically, multinational or multiethnic forces have existed in varying configurations for thousands of years. Whether in the form of mercenaries, forces in multi-racial states, colonial forces, or military alliances, “[h]eterogeneous armies appear in fact to have been the rule rather than the exception.”<sup>6</sup> International military operations in the twentieth century only confirm this observation. The current context for multinationality in the world’s militaries has resulted largely from the political alliances that developed after World War II, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United Nations (UN) giving rise to increasing military and political cooperation between member states and laying the foundation for many of the world’s current multinational military and peacekeeping operations. Yet multinational military actions during the Cold War can hardly compare in number or impact of those since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Since the Persian Gulf War, the past fourteen years have seen a dramatic rise in the use of multinational forces, and events in the early twenty-first century suggest that multinational military operations will become more common.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For an excellent overview of this phenomenon, see Roger H. Palin, *Multinational Military Forces: Problems and Prospects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> R.A. Preston, “The Multi-Cultural and Multinational Problems of Armed Forces,” in *New Dimensions in Military History*, ed. R.F. Wiegly (San Rafael: Presidio Press, 1975), 229. For additional historical discussion of multiethnic and multicultural armies, see N.F. Dreisziger, ed. *Ethnic Armies: Polyethnic Armed Forces from the Time of the Habsburgs to the Age of the Superpowers* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfried Laurier University Press, 1990).

<sup>7</sup> For studies that welcome the inevitability of greater integration, see Thomas-Durell Young, *Multinational Land Forces and the NATO Force Structure Review* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2000); Thomas-Durell Young, ed. *Command in NATO after the Cold War: Alliance, National, and Multinational Considerations* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army

The end of the Cold War marked an important shift in how militaries conceptualized the use of multinational forces and considered participating in them. Much attention has been paid to the effects of military downsizing in the early 1990s, and this trend has clearly impacted many countries' willingness to participate in multinational forces, which are seen as a means for maintaining viable militaries on leaner budgets.<sup>8</sup> The early 1990s also saw the U.S. successfully lead a multinational coalition against Iraq. The Persian Gulf War marked a watershed moment in multinational military coalitions. Many military officials, politicians, and scholars have heralded this military action as an example of what effective multinational deployments look like. Nations as disparate as Egypt, Pakistan, France, and Britain, as well as U.S. and its allies, took six weeks to carry out a military campaign with minimal losses.<sup>9</sup>

Prior to the Persian Gulf War and the end of the Cold War, such large-scale multinational deployments were much less common. After World War II, the Korean War was the first international conflict that drew upon multinational forces in which the U.S. participated. During this time, the UN also incorporated multinational strategies into its evolving peacekeeping operations. Yet prior to 1990, the UN sponsored only thirteen peacekeeping operations, as compared to the forty-one it has conducted since that time. As of 2002 there were fifteen operations underway. The U.S. has participated in eight of these operations.<sup>10</sup>

Since the Persian Gulf War and up through mid-1999, Western militaries were involved in fifty-four military actions, including NATO mandated actions, UN peacekeeping operations, and a variety of domestic security and humanitarian activities. The roles they played range from the mobilization of U.S. Army reservists to fight fires in Washington State in July 1994 to the U.S., British, and French air strikes against Serbs in Croatia, the largest NATO military action during this period, in November of the same year. The United States participated in forty of these actions, and nineteen of them involved U.S. forces deploying in some fashion with military personnel from other nations.<sup>11</sup>

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War College, 1997); Thomas-Durell Young, *Multinational Land Formations and NATO: Reforming Practices and Structures* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1997); Thomas-Durrell Young and Karl H. Lowe, *The Case for U.S. Participation in NATO Multinational Corps* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1990); and Raymond A. Millen, *Tweaking NATO: The Case for Integrated Multinational Divisions* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2002). For a more skeptical assessment of multinational operations, see Palin.

<sup>8</sup> See Mark J. Eitelberg, "Military Manpower and the Future Force," in *American Defense Annual: 1993*, ed. Joseph Krusel (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 135-153; Christopher Dandeker, "New Times for the Military: Some Sociological Remarks on the Changing Role and Structure of the Armed Forces of the Advanced Societies," *British Journal of Sociology* 45 (1994): 645-8; and Joseph L. Soeters, "Value Orientations in Military Academies: A Thirteen Country Study," *Armed Forces and Society* 24 (1997): 7-8.

<sup>9</sup> For an example of such an evaluation of the Persian Gulf War, see Palin, *Multinational Military Forces*, 22-3.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations, Department of Public Information, "United Nations Peacekeeping" (accessed 18 January 2002), available from <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/ques.htm>; Internet.

<sup>11</sup> Charles C. Moskos, John Allen Williams, and David R. Segal, *The Postmodern Military: Armed Forces after the Cold War* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), 279-82.

In fact, multinationality is one of the key elements that characterize the postmodern military, a term that has been applied to Western militaries in the post-Cold War environment and that denotes a number of changes that these militaries are undergoing. They include fewer distinctions between the civilian and military realms, increasingly similarities within the military and between branches, a shift from national defense to peace-keeping missions, an increase in how often national militaries deploy in the service of international organizations, and the increasing internationalization of military forces themselves.<sup>12</sup> The missions of many Western militaries are in transition, and participating in multinational forces allows individual nations and their militaries to better accomplish their defense and security goals in this new era. Postmodern militaries are also characterized by the “erosion of marital values,” especially those associated with traditional understandings of sexuality, sexual orientation, and masculinity.<sup>13</sup> Generally speaking, these changes have resulted in a growing willingness to allow gays and lesbians to serve in many Western militaries. Britain, Germany, Canada, Australia, and Israel, for example, are among twenty-four foreign armed forces that have lifted their gay bans since the Dutch became the first military to do so in 1974.<sup>14</sup>

### **Multinational forces and U.S. personnel**

Since World War II, the U.S. has engaged in a number of military actions and peacekeeping operations that can be considered multinational in force composition. In traditional military terms, the U.S. has contributed forces to NATO and participated in military actions under NATO mandates, as well as leading its own multinational coalitions, such the Korean and Persian Gulf Wars, Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, and the recently-concluded invasion of Iraq. It has actively supported UN peacekeeping operations, contributing hundreds of personnel over the past forty-eight years. As well, the U.S. has led or sponsored its own peacekeeping missions, such as the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) in the Sinai and the Multinational Force (MNF) in Lebanon. Other sites in which U.S. personnel serve or work with service members from other countries include NATO headquarters, war colleges in the U.S. and abroad, and NORAD, the North American Aerospace Defense Command.

In the United States and abroad, officers of various nationalities interact quite closely in war colleges and multinational headquarters. In a study of international military cooperation, Charles C. Moskos interviewed international officers at American war, command and staff colleges, as well as interviewing officers at the Joint Service Command Staff College in the United Kingdom and at SHAPE, NATO headquarters, in Belgium. According to Moskos, “In 2001, close to 9,000 foreign military officers coming from over 100 countries received some sort of professional training in American military

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of these militaries in relation to the concept of postmodernism, see selections from Moskos, Williams and Segal, including Christopher Dandeker, “The United Kingdom: The Overstretched Military,” 32-50. For discussions that emphasize military diversity see selections from Joseph Soeters and Jan van der Meulen, eds., *Managing Diversity in the Armed Forces: Experiences from Nine Countries* (Tilburg: Tilburg University Press, 1999), including Donna Winslow, “Diversity in the Canadian Forces,” 33-54; and Christopher Dandeker and David Mason, “Diversity in the UK Armed Forces: The Debate about the Representation of Women and Minority Ethnic Groups,” 55-72.



programs.”<sup>15</sup> As a result of these exchange opportunities, officers are exposed to numerous, distinct national cultures at the National War College, Industrial College of the Armed Forces, Army War College, Air War College, Marine Corps University, Army Command General Staff College, and Navy Staff College. The most significant exchange program is the International Military Education and Training (IMET). Approximately 400 international officers take part in this program every year, providing U.S. military personnel with important cultural training as they prepare for increasing interaction with multinational forces.<sup>16</sup> U.S. personnel also serve with non-American personnel at NATO headquarters or Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE). Approximately 800 officers serve in NATO headquarters, which includes not only officers from NATO members, but also those from members of Partnership for Peace countries, including Eastern European countries and former republics from the Soviet Union.<sup>17</sup>

Although U.S. personnel often interact quite closely with personnel from other NATO member states in NATO multinational headquarters, mostly at the command level, the degree of multinational integration varies greatly in NATO’s standing multinational land forces. For example, the I German/Netherlands Corps is one of most deeply integrated NATO multinational land forces. It is not merely multinational in name, but in function, as well. Defense ministers of both countries have pledged to change national laws where necessary to facilitate this merger, and the “two governments have the stated aim of providing the Corps Commander, irrespective of nationality, the ability of exercising the equivalent of Full Command over the corps headquarters and subordinate units.”<sup>18</sup> In stark contrast, the two corps in which U.S. personnel serve are multinational in name only and are clearly non-integrated. As Young writes, “The two corps headquarters remain national and cooperation is effected through the presence of a small number of exchange staff officers.”<sup>19</sup> Even though U.S. and German personnel are able to interact in theory, it is only possible at the command level through such staff exchanges.

In general, even though the alliance structure of NATO affords personnel from member countries limited exposure to each other, traditionally in most combat situations, service personnel from different nations typically do not fight alongside each other. Typically, multinational interoperability takes place at or above the battalion, ship, or aircraft level, which means that while commanders or upper-level personnel may interact with each other, personal contact between service members below these levels occurs infrequently.<sup>20</sup> The exceptions include small Special Forces operations, ACE Rapid Reactions Forces, and aircrew in NATO Airborne Early Warning and Control

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<sup>15</sup> Charles C. Moskos, “Multinational Military Cooperation Enhancing American Military Effectiveness” (unpublished paper, 2002), 6.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>18</sup> Young, *Multinational Land Formations and NATO*, 27.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Codner, email to first author, 11 February 2002; Thomas-Durrel Young, interview with first author, 1 July 2002. For a discussion of multinational naval operations, see Fred W. Crickland, Paul T. Mitchell, and Katherine Orr, eds., *Multinational Naval Cooperation and Foreign Policy into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1999).

(NAEW&C) Force. As well, personnel may be assigned as liaison staff or they may serve in exchange posts.

Since the end of World War II, U.S. personnel have served in a wide variety of peacekeeping missions, some controlled by the UN, others merely authorized by the international body.<sup>21</sup> As of July 31, 2002, 691 U.S. personnel were involved in UN-controlled peace operations around the world. Most of these personnel are civilian police (659), and the remaining are military personnel, 31 of whom serve as military observers with just one in a military role. UN-controlled peacekeeping operations tend to be fairly integrated, and as Colonel Michael Dooley writes, “In general, U.S. personnel assigned to UN-controlled peace operations (as contrasted with UN-authorized peace operations) work closely with personnel from other nations.”<sup>22</sup> The U.S. contributes many more troops to other types of peace operations. More than 8,450 U.S. military personnel serve in operations such as the Multi-national Force and Observers (MFO) sponsored by the U.S. or in Bosnia under NATO mandates.<sup>23</sup> In these types of operations, there is much less interaction between national contingents: “In general, the U.S. provides individual staff members to multi-national headquarters and ... units to perform specific tasks/missions.”<sup>24</sup> This arrangement allows national contingents to maintain direct command over their military personnel.

NORAD is a binational organization created by the United States and Canada to monitor and control North American aerospace. NORAD headquarters are located at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado, along with a command and control center at Cheyenne Mountain Air Station. Three subordinate headquarters are located in Alaska, Manitoba, and Florida. Both Canadian and U.S. military personnel staff these headquarters. Approximately 120 Canadians are stationed at NORAD headquarters in Colorado, with an additional 180 Canadian personnel serving in Alaska and Florida. Approximately 70 U.S. personnel serve in Canada. Overall, the ratio of American to Canadian personnel assigned to NORAD is 3 to 1.<sup>25</sup>

## **Multinational forces and personnel policies**

### *NATO*

Generally speaking, NATO does not set policies of any sort for its member states, but encourages standardization to promote effective military cooperation among members. As an “intergovernmental organization in which member countries retain their sovereignty and independence,” NATO respects the personnel policies of its member states and has no power to change them.<sup>26</sup> Yet since its inception NATO has been

<sup>21</sup> For an overview to U.S. participation in such operations, see Daniel P. Bolger, *Savage Peace: Americans at War in the 1990s* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1995); Linda S. Jamison, *The U.S. Role in United Nations Peace Operations*. Third Edition. Washington, D.C.: Council for a Livable World Education Fund, 2001.

<sup>22</sup> Colonel Michael Dooley, email to first author, August 21, 2002.

<sup>23</sup> Thom Shanker and James Dao, “U.S. Might Refuse New Peace Duties Without Immunity,” *New York Times*, 3 July 2002, national ed., A1, A4.

<sup>24</sup> Dooley, interview.

<sup>25</sup> North American Aerospace Defense Command, NORAD Home (accessed 1 September 2002), available from <http://www.norad.mil>; Internet; Major Douglas Martin, interview with first author, 21 October 2002.

<sup>26</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *NATO Handbook* (Brussels: NATO Office of Information and Press, 1995).

concerned about standardization, and to this end, the NATO Standardization Group was formed. As the “central Alliance body for remedying existing deficiencies,” it works to mitigate the most extreme differences between member countries and facilitates the “dual aims of standardization: enhancing NATO’s military posture, and making more efficient use of available resources.”<sup>27</sup> NATO standardization agreements, (STANAGS) are divided into three areas: operational, material, and administrative. Operational standards apply to concepts, doctrines, tactics, logistics, and training, while material standards refer to “production codes of practices and material specifications,”<sup>28</sup> including weapons and communications systems, ammunition, fuel, and supplies. Administrative standards set common terminology for NATO personnel to use in the previous two areas.

NATO and its member countries view standardization as a flexible concept that is used when necessary. It is not the goal of the Alliance to create an absolute unified system. Standardization among NATO members is voluntary and a “means of achieving the desired end, but is not an end in itself.”<sup>29</sup> As Joseph I. Coffey notes, “Every nation ... has insisted on maintaining its own armed forces, which are organized, trained and equipped to serve national ends as well as those of the Atlantic alliance.”<sup>30</sup> Even though NATO cannot require standardization without threatening each nation’s sovereignty, NATO leaders encourage standardization when they deem that doing so would promote efficiency.

Yet in relation to military personnel, NATO has even less authority to dictate policy. There has never been a STANAG that specifies the kinds of personnel each member state can contribute to NATO forces or deployments. Each NATO member retains to the right to select personnel they contribute to NATO and is “responsible individually ... to equip the forces which they have earmarked for or assigned to NATO.”<sup>31</sup> Thus, NATO encourages members to view standardization as means to create enough commonality between militaries—primarily in areas such as equipment interoperability and military doctrine—to facilitate effective cooperation without impeding on their sovereignty over their own militaries. Attaining standardization has not been simple, and the more pressing difficulties of synchronizing sometimes disparate militaries in terms of basic doctrine and equipment interoperability have meant that little if any attention has been given to questions of cultural interoperability.<sup>32</sup>

The question of women’s roles in multinational units is an imperfect corollary to the question of homosexual personnel in similar situations, but it does provide a useful analogy that has received slightly more attention in both organizational and academic publications.<sup>33</sup> No STANAGS address the issue of women or homosexual personnel with regard to NATO force composition or management. Within the last decade, however, NATO has started to address issues concerning women in the military, creating the

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<sup>27</sup> United States, Department of Defense, *A Guide for DoD Personnel Participating in NATO Standardization* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1991), 2-13.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-1.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-2.

<sup>30</sup> Joseph I. Coffey, *The Future Role of NATO* (New York: Foreign Policy Association, 1995), 18.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-2.

<sup>32</sup> Christopher Dandeker, email to first author, 29 January 2002.

<sup>33</sup> For example, see NATO Information Service, “Women in Uniform: Vicki Nielson Examines the Integration of Women in NATO Armed Forces,” *NATO Review* 49 (Summer 2001): 30-32.

International Office on Women in the NATO Forces in 1997. As Admiral Guido Venturoni, Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, noted during the fiftieth anniversary of NATO, “women continue to prove they can serve with distinction in the military services and their numbers have grown significantly.”<sup>34</sup> NATO members continue to allow more military opportunities for women, and women’s presence in multinational operations has increased: “This contribution is most visible in the NATO-led SFOR multinational force in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, and now KFOR, where military women serve side-by-side with their male counterparts bringing stability and security to this troubled region.”<sup>35</sup>

NATO has no policy for managing conflicts between countries that maintain different policies about women’s roles in the military, and the lack of administrative policy leaves little guidance about how to deal with problems that may arise. Officially, the alliance’s respect for national sovereignty means that member countries must respect all others’ policies on women as well as gay and lesbian personnel. Yet recent discussion at NATO headquarters and with the International Military Staff about creating clear guidelines concerning sexual harassment suggests a need for policies that would apply to all member nations that send personnel to staff NATO headquarters. Such policies would not contradict national personnel policies that stipulate conditions on who can or cannot serve in the military, but would require some countries to work with women in contexts they may not officially condone in their national settings.<sup>36</sup>

According to scholars who study NATO, the Alliance faces many more pressing issues than setting administrative guidelines for women in NATO forces, much less homosexual personnel. Thomas-Durrel Young observes, “[T]here are so many other issues in trying to make multinationality work that something like this [dealing with homosexual personnel] just pales.”<sup>37</sup> According to many of his publications, as well as other scholars’ work on U.S. participation in multinational NATO forces, problems related to command and control are the key impediments to the effectiveness and viability of NATO multinational forces and the greatest threat to national sovereignty.<sup>38</sup> Because each nation is responsible for raising, training, and equipping personnel that it deploys to NATO multinational land forces, the NATO multinational force commander retains a very limited and narrow type of control over personnel assigned to the mission. Emphasizing the difficulties this presents for accomplishing military objectives, Young asks, “[H]ow can Allied commanders plan to employ such formations in crisis and war,

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<sup>34</sup> Office on Women in the NATO Forces, International Military Staff, *Women in the NATO Armed Forces: Year-in-Review* (Brussels, Belgium: NATO, 1999-2000), 2.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Anonymous, NATO, International Military Staff, interview with first author, 17 October 2002.

<sup>37</sup> Young, interview.

<sup>38</sup> See Young, *Multinational Land Forces and the NATO Force Structure Review*; Young, ed. *Command in NATO after the Cold War*; Young, *Multinational Land Formations and NATO*; and Millen, *Tweaking NATO*; and Palin, 15-30. For a discussion of legal issues that multinational NATO units face, see Dieter Fleck, “Legal Issues of Multinational Military Units: Tasks, Missions, Stationing Law, Command and Control,” in *International Law Across the Spectrum of Conflict*, ed. Michael N. Schmitt (Newport, Rhode Island: Naval War College, 2000), 161-178.

given the legal, political and financial restrictions placed upon them by sovereign contributors?”<sup>39</sup>

The degree to which NATO commanders can assume full command over their forces remains limited: “no multinational force commander ... has the same command authority over subordinated foreign units as he would have in an equivalent national command.”<sup>40</sup> Dieter Fleck concurs with Young’s analysis: “No NATO commander has full command over the forces assigned to him. Instead, nations ... delegate only operational command or operational control.”<sup>41</sup> To insure that personnel working under the auspices of NATO follow national laws and policies, each nation appoints a national commander who exercises full command. It is through such national contingent commanders that the “nation retains full responsibility for administration, personnel management and discipline, in addition to logistic support.”<sup>42</sup> Hence, NATO’s respect for national sovereignty requires a de facto support for gays and lesbians who serve in integrated NATO missions. As long as NATO member countries allow them to serve, the alliance itself must respect and support their presence.<sup>43</sup>

#### *North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD)*

In terms of command and control issues and personnel management, NORAD functions similarly to NATO. As a binational organization, it is not considered integrated, as personnel retain membership in their national forces and remain subject to all national and military laws and policies. The NORAD command structure itself reflects this binational character: the commander in chief of NORAD is a U.S. four-star general; the deputy commander in chief is a Canadian three-star general. The regional headquarters are set up in a similar fashion. At the Canadian Forces Base in Winnipeg, Manitoba, a Canadian general is in command, while a U.S. general serves as deputy. In this way, a national commander is present at every NORAD installation, thus allowing national commanders to exercise full authority over personnel from their countries. All disciplinary action remains a national concern, and personnel are not subject to the personnel policies of the other country.<sup>44</sup>

#### *United Nations*

While NATO and NORAD have created no policies that address the issue of gay and lesbian personnel, the United Nations does have a few institutional mechanisms in place that deal with issues relating to sexual orientation. The official position of the UN regarding discrimination of any kind is reflected in its upholding of the principle of universal human rights, which ostensibly includes sexual orientation. Juan Carlos Brandt, Associate Spokesman for the Secretary General mentioned at a daily press briefing in 1997 that the “United Nations does not discriminate on the basis of nationality, gender,

<sup>39</sup> Young, *Multinational Land Forces and NATO*, 2.

<sup>40</sup> Young, *Multinational Land Formations and NATO*, 13.

<sup>41</sup> Fleck, 171.

<sup>42</sup> Palin, 18.

<sup>43</sup> Raymond A. Millen writes that “some contributing nations may permit female soldiers in combat units or gays in the military. Such issues remain within the purview of the relevant commander, and the host nation headquarters should accommodate the cultural differences without derailing the integrated concept” (22).

<sup>44</sup> Martin, interview.

religion, or sexual orientation.”<sup>45</sup> Yet such statements have not always translated into concrete policies. As Jan Koller, President of the United Nations Gay Lesbian or Bisexual Employees (UNGLOBE), writes, “Internally, in spite of claims of non-discrimination, the UN does not extend any benefits such as visas, insurance, etc., ... to same sex partners, nor does it have any policies specifically dealing with discrimination based on sexual orientation.”<sup>46</sup> In spite of the lack of a clear policy, Koller suggests that the UN is beginning to look more closely at the issue of sexual orientation under the broader considerations of human rights: “The High Commission for Human Rights has started to include sexual orientation issues in her reports, and agencies ... have begun to press for benefits for GLB staff. The working environment has also changed dramatically.”<sup>47</sup> The formation of UNGLOBE in April, 1996 is perhaps the most visible indicator that the UN is slowly taking steps to insure greater equality for gay, lesbian, and bisexual staff.<sup>48</sup>

Even though the UN is taking small steps to address sexual orientation issues that concern its administrative staff, it currently has no policy with regard to sexual orientation for personnel who participate in UN peacekeeping operations. Officials in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) at the UN have no knowledge of any policy in this regard and “could not think of any instance in a mission when this [sexual orientation] became an issue, whether in regard to differences in policy among the various TCCs [troop contributing countries], command and control, integration, or personnel/admin conflicts.”<sup>49</sup> As DPKO acknowledges, an issue in any of these areas would have to be of serious magnitude to warrant attention, and it is quite possible that low-level conflicts have occurred. Most likely, contingent commanders would have dealt with such problems locally. Interestingly, DPKO notes that “no departing Force Commander and Chief Military Observer has ever mentioned the issue in an end-assignment report, where more general observations and recommendations to DPKO are shared.”<sup>50</sup> From the institution’s point of view, there may be no pressing need to address the issue, as it has not caused any problems for the UN in its administration of peacekeeping operations.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Juan Carlos Brant, Daily Press Briefing of Office of Spokesman for the Secretary-General, 31 January 1997, included in UNGLOBE Information Kit, United Nations Gay Lesbian or Bisexual Employees, 2000.

<sup>46</sup> Jan Koller, email to first author, 21 August 2002.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. For an example of arguments presented to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, see Scott Long, “Sexual Orientation and the Human Rights Mechanisms of the United Nations,” (San Francisco, CA: International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, 1999) available from [http://www.iglhrc.org/issues/UN/Human\\_Rights\\_Mech\\_UN.pdf](http://www.iglhrc.org/issues/UN/Human_Rights_Mech_UN.pdf); Internet.

<sup>48</sup> For a discussion of how and why the group formed, see “Gay Staffers Seek Equal Treatment,” Inter Press Service via NewsEdge Corporation 17 August 1999, included in UNGLOBE Information Kit.

<sup>49</sup> Corinna Kuhl, email to first author, 10 September 2002; Cedric de Coning, email to first author, 24 August 2002.

<sup>50</sup> Kuhl, email.

<sup>51</sup> For the past several years, the UN conducted an intensive review of its peacekeeping operations. However, the review process has not addressed issues surrounding sexual orientation. For highlights of the review, see *The Brahimi Report, A/55/502* (New York: United Nations, 2000); *Implementation of the Recommendations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations* (New York: United Nations, 2001); and Nassrine Azimi and Chang Li Lin, eds., *The*

One possible reason why the DPKO has heard of no problems with regard to sexual orientation and peacekeeping missions may pertain to the authority that national militaries retain over their personnel in the field. Similar to NATO and NORAD, service personnel working under a UN banner are subject to the rules and regulations of their own national governments. In addition, they are subject to UN policies and must respect laws of the host country in which they are deployed. As a Joint Chiefs of Staff publication on peacekeeping operations makes clear:

Normally, military and civilian personnel of a PKO [peacekeeping operation] remain under the criminal jurisdiction of their own nations ... [Members of a PKO] must respect the laws, regulations, religions, and mores of the host nation and other parties, and refrain from all political activity and other activity inconsistent with the requirement of strict neutrality. Members of the PKO remain subject to their national contingent's code of military law.<sup>52</sup>

Similar to NATO and NORAD, national contingent commanders comprise part of the force that a nation deploys to a UN peacekeeping operation. They are “responsible for disciplinary action within their own contingents in accordance with their national codes of military law.”<sup>53</sup> The authority for these national contingent commanders to carry out this role typically is included in the status of forces agreements (SOFA) that establish the legality of the peacekeeping operation.<sup>54</sup>

The clarity, though, of national sovereignty in the formation of peacekeeping operations has become a source of confusion in the field. Similar to the evaluations of NATO that have taken place in the past ten years, experts on UN peacekeeping operations see command and control issues as central to the challenges facing the UN as it continues its peacekeeping endeavors. Exploring problems that the military component of UN peacekeeping operations face, Stuart Gordon cites “institutional confusion, a lack of unity of direction, inappropriate mandates and insufficient resources” as major hurdles. He notes that these obstacles have “impinged heavily on the adequacy of command and control arrangements in UN operations such as those found within Bosnia, Rwanda and Somalia in the early 1990s.”<sup>55</sup> Gordon is highly critical of the UN, for in contrast to NATO, he sees the UN as less prepared to martial troops under a military operation.<sup>56</sup> Ultimately, many scholars conclude that greater command authority must be given to commanders of multinational forces. Otherwise the ability to accomplish their missions successfully will be thwarted, risking the lives of service members under their command. If these evaluations are realized and put into place, it is unclear how such transfers of authority might influence policies concerning sexual orientation.

*Reform Process of United Nations Peace Operations: Debriefing and Lessons* (Boston: Kluwer Law International, 2001).

<sup>52</sup> United States, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Tactics, Technique, and Procedures for Peacekeeping Operations*, Joint Pub. 3-07.3 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, 1994), II-11.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, III-3.

<sup>54</sup> See the sample SOFA listed in Appendix C of the Joint Chiefs of Staff publication, especially pp. C-2-9.

<sup>55</sup> Stuart Gordon, “Icarus Rising and Falling: The Evolution of UN Command and Control Structures,” in *Aspects of Peacekeeping*, ed. D. S. Gordon and F. H. Toase (Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass, 2001), 20.

<sup>56</sup> For Palin’s criticism of the UN, see pp. 15-30.

## Multinational units and homosexual personnel: five case studies

### *Colonel René Holtel, Royal Netherlands Army*

At the age of fifty-four, Colonel René Holtel recently retired from the Royal Netherlands Army, but throughout his career he worked with and commanded U.S. military personnel in both NATO exercises and UN peacekeeping operations. In 1978, he served as Company Commander of Army Corps Ammunition Supply Company, and during exercise “Saxon Drive” in Germany, he was ordered to replace the actual company commander who had been dismissed. One of the units under his care during the exercise was a U.S. tank battalion. In the early 1990s, in another exercise, while serving as the company commander of the 12<sup>th</sup> Mechanical Brigade Supply Company, a U.S. platoon served under him. From early January 2001, through the end of September 2001, Holtel served with U.S. personnel at the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE). During his tenure at UNMEE, he served in a variety of capacities: as Chief of Staff (COS) of the Military Observer Group, Chief Military Observer (CMO), and Chief Liaison Officer (CLSO) between UNMEE Headquarters and the respective parties’ governments in Asmara and Addis Ababa.

In July 2000, the UN Security Council established UNMEE as a means to monitor the ceasefire that had been agreed upon by Ethiopia and Eritrea. The main role of UNMEE was to “establish and maintain liaison with the parties” and “establish and put into operation the mechanism for verifying the cessation of hostilities.”<sup>57</sup> Its area of operations runs the length of the former colonial boundary between Ethiopia and Eritrea, as stipulated by the Algiers Peace Agreement of December 2000. This demilitarized temporary security zone has been divided into three sections: Center, West, and East. During Holtel’s service, three separate national battalions acted as the peacekeeping military forces: Jordan operated in Section West, the Netherlands in Section Center, and Kenya in Section East (India now operates in Section Center).<sup>58</sup>

Officers from countries contributing personnel to the actual peacekeeping forces make up the staff of UNMEE’s military headquarters, which was located in Eritrea. Both the battalions and the headquarter staff officers are under the operational command of the UN through the Force Commander, Major General Patrick C. Cammaert, Royal Netherlands Marine Corps, who is considered a UN staff member for the duration of his appointment. Operational command ostensibly gives the force commander enough authority to accomplish the strictly defined goals of the UN Mission. All other command and control issues including discipline, tour of duty, rotation, payment, legal positions, and logistics are the responsibility of the contributing countries, which a senior national officer represents at the mission. This arrangement for UNMEE is typical of UN missions, and coordination can be challenging. As Holtel wryly observed, “Like one diplomat once said, the problem of the UN is that the force commander is not in command.”

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<sup>57</sup> Department of Public Information and Department of Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations, “Ehtiopia and Eritrea – UNMEE: Background,” available from [www.un.org/Depts/dpko/unmee/unmeeB.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/unmee/unmeeB.htm); Internet.

<sup>58</sup> The following discussion is based on Colonel René Holtel, email to first author, 28 April 2002, and interview with first author, 24 April 2002.



While the military force of the mission was comprised of only three nations, the Observer Group consisted of members from forty-eight different nationalities, including personnel from Western and Eastern Europe, North and South America, Australia, New Zealand, Southwest Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. During Holtel's nine months with UNMEE, six U.S. military personnel served with him as Military Observers, ranking lieutenant colonel, major, captain—both career and reserve—from the US Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps.

As Chief of Staff and Chief Military Observer, Holtel organized observer teams and managed the mission's daily operations. This vantage point allowed him to interact extensively with all the military observers. Of the U.S. personnel who worked for him, he said, "In general, the Americans performed as most members of NATO armies do; not better, not worse. They took initiatives; they knew their place, although sometimes grinding their teeth when their team leaders proved to be less than competent or active; they had their likes and dislikes; in short: they were just people, but competent ones." Holtel did note that U.S. personnel were often better qualified than many of their colleagues with regard to military terminology, but that because English is the official language of UNMEE, this was not surprising. As in many multinational peacekeeping operations, occasional frustrations and low level conflicts emerged among US personnel and service members from other countries, but overall, Holtel observed that service members from the U.S. worked effectively and professionally with peers from other military forces.

The smooth working relationships that Holtel developed with U.S. personnel, as well as observers from other nations, was not disrupted or damaged by his disclosure of his sexual orientation. During a staff meeting at which two U.S. service members were present, Holtel's staff discussed challenges they would face when female military observers joined them. In the course of the conversation, as staff members were speculating on the difficulties of maintaining privacy while living together in small teams in close proximity, Holtel responded by suggestively pointing out that even in all male teams, problems could arise.

And they said, "Yes, but don't expect them to be homosexuals." [I said,] "You're saying that as a kind of accusation." Then the American Major said, "Well I think it is quite abnormal." And I told him, "Please hold your tongue, because I'm gay." And that caused a deafening silence ... He was stupefied. He didn't know what to say. So I didn't ask him to comment on it. I just went on with the meeting.

Although Holtel could not confirm that every U.S. service member knew of his sexual orientation after this point, his experience with such disclosures led him to believe that the news spread quite rapidly: "There's no such thing as proof, but stories like these tend to spread like bushfire since they are generally too juicy not to be told." Even so, Holtel refrained from encouraging such gossip, even as he disclosed his orientation.

Interestingly, no one, including the American Major, approached Holtel after this meeting to discuss his homosexuality, in spite of the surprise it stirred in those members present. Speculating as to why this might have been the case, especially for the Americans, Holtel suggested that responding to his disclosure directly might have caused others to think that a service member might have been gay, which would have caused

unnecessary difficulties, especially for U.S. personnel. Second, and perhaps more importantly, Holtel recognized that his status as a full colonel and as their commanding officer might have effectively stopped any second-guessing on their part and made it difficult for U.S. personnel to ask personal questions of a taboo nature of their foreign commander.

Accordingly, Holtel was also aware of the positive results revealing explicitly what may have been suspected: “If one’s commanding officer comes out for being gay, you see then with regard to that issue ... some relaxation in the unit.” His experience taught him that coming out often comforts others and allows them to focus on their jobs, rather than having to surmise and gossip about their leader’s sexuality. Coming out, he said, “causes relaxation among the straight people as well, because they are not having questions anymore about who or what their commander is.” By coming out of the closet, he said, “you make a statement. You pose a clear guideline and that is don’t f--- around with gays, because I’m not going to accept that. You don’t have to say that. You make it clear by stating that you’re gay.”

Hotel also recalled disclosing his sexual orientation to a Canadian Lieutenant Colonel who worked as his chief of operations and a Kenyan Brigadier General who replaced him as Chief Military Observer. When the Canadian learned of Holtel’s homosexuality, Holtel said, “He was quite flabbergasted. He was quite astonished hearing me say that I’m gay.” As Holtel was preparing to leave the mission, he met with his replacement:

I told him I was gay in the week that I left the mission, and he was astonished, as well. He came up with the classical reaction, “That is impossible.” So I said, “Well, that is stupid.” Well we didn’t have to deal with each other anymore because I was leaving the mission, but I’m sure it wouldn’t have made a difference for him.

When pressed to explain why he thought so, Holtel said, “Because they’re forced to cooperate with you, which means that the only way out is, well to deal with you. And then they find out that you’re fit for the job. And after that all the other considerations become minor details.”

Reflecting back on his entire career, Holtel remembered that right after the Netherlands lifted its ban on homosexual personnel, gay service members had to work harder than their heterosexual colleagues to prove that they could succeed at their jobs. Now, he said, “You can be an average officer and the fact that you’re gay is not an issue.” This appears to be no less true in an international context like a UN operation. Even though Holtel attributes his own success with UNMEE to his excellent service record, he wonders if all homosexual personnel would have to do as well to be accepted as gay. In contrast to national militaries, “There’s quite a difference because, it’s in an international environment. The United Nations doesn’t decide on careers and promotions ... So that means that even if they wouldn’t like it, members of other national communities ... have to deal with it, whether they like it or not.” The only recourse for someone extremely uncomfortable with a homosexual officer would be to “tell the United Nations organization that you’re completely unfit for the job.” But as Holtel points out, the political ramifications of telling contributing countries that they are sending unfit personnel make this an unlikely scenario.

Ultimately, Holtel believed his disclosure, “never affected my relations with US and other personnel in a negative way.” Describing himself, he cited his leadership style as the most important reason why he did not experience difficulties: “Oh, even if it sounds old-fashioned, I think there’s still a lot of truth in what Napoleon once said, ‘It’s the commander who makes the regiment.’ You’re the commander. You decide, and you said this is the way it’s going to be. That’s it.” This traditional view of authority characterized not only the way in which he dealt with coming out as gay to the service members who served under him, but also for many potentially contentious issues. Confronting the issue of women joining his teams of observers, he presented the issue directly to his staff as one of practical necessity. As he said to them,

“[Women] are a part of quite a lot of military organizations all over the world, and if we ask them to deliver people to the Eritrea mission, it means they could deliver men and women. And we have to deal with that. Or tell them in advance that we don’t want women. Well if you feel like doing that, then feel free.” I waited for the comments. So they decided not to do that, so we got a few women.

Overall, Holtel’s experience at UNMEE confirmed his sense that there are many more important issues facing UN peacekeeping operations than homosexuality. Ranking sexuality low on this of problems, he said that “skin color is number one on the list of priorities; the second is NATO and non-NATO; the third is male or female. And being gay or not, well it depends on how you deal with it.”

Upon leaving UNMEE Holtel received excellent evaluations and also received commendations both from his Force Commander, Brigadier General Peter Augustine Blaye, the Head of the Mission of the Organization of African Unity, and Joseph Legwaila, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for UNMEE. Legwaila’s commendation noted that:

[T]he energetic sincerity of your commitment to the Mission’s success has made you indispensable ... You have been a leader in word and deed for the military observers, and a staunch defender of the Mission in your daily contacts with the parties. You leave behind a high standard of professionalism as a soldier, a peacekeeper, and a peacebuilder.

Even though Holtel somewhat modestly dismissed the importance of the praise those officials offered, he recognized that “the fact that I’m gay, because they both know, they both were aware, has nothing to do with the job you do.”

*Major Philip Edwards, Technical Liaison Officer, Canadian Air Force*

Major Philip Edwards has served in the Canadian Armed Forces for nineteen years. For four years, he served on the liaison staff of the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C., and worked directly with two Pentagon agencies. In his role as Technical Liaison Officer, he came into contact with approximately 75 U.S. personnel, twenty percent of whom were military personnel, while the rest were civilians. Of the military personnel he worked with, most were mid-grade officers, including captains, majors, lieutenant colonels, and occasionally full colonels.

He worked closely with another Canadian in his office, but his remaining peers were exclusively U.S. personnel. He described the tenor of this office as a “very close

collegial atmosphere” and very “cordial.”<sup>59</sup> Relations between him and his fellow Canadian and the U.S. civilian and military staff were quite good, with the occasional healthy competition between them. Edwards described the cultural differences as apparent but minimal:

[I]t’s the, “What’s the difference between an American and Canadian?” that always comes up in issues. I would say it’s a healthy tension—either the fifty-first state of the eleventh province, depending on your perspective. But in the areas that I work in, these are very close and special relationships. Everyone involved is ... governed by security regulations ... but ... as a foreigner, even, it’s very rare that you’ll encounter any tension.

According to Edwards, the nature of his service with the U.S. personnel allowed him to develop very close working relationships with his colleagues, and differences in national identity did little to threaten them.

The friendly work atmosphere laid a foundation for Edwards to come out and serve in his role as an openly gay officer with no detriment to the smooth workings of his office. Edwards characterized his approach to disclosing his sexual orientation as a slow gradual process. “In most cases,” he said, “people have known me quite well before they come into that part of my life.” Many of his colleagues learned of his sexual orientation through observing Edwards’ actions, rather than through explicit conversations. When appropriate, he brought his partner to social events organized through work. Edwards could not think of any negative repercussions after appearing with his partner in such situations: “I’ve not detected any change in people’s attitudes or relationship with me.” Even when the director of one of the agencies that he worked for invited him to his Christmas party, Edwards said, “I’m bringing my partner with me,’ and certainly no one gave me any negative repercussions or suggested that that not occur.” His coming out was a very quiet, yet very visible, statement that he considered carefully, a tactic that may have helped promote greater acceptance.

Yet Edwards was not unaware of the potential problems that could have emerged, for he did join the Canadian military long before it lifted its ban on homosexual personnel. When he considered his role as a foreign officer serving in the U.S., he recognized the need to exercise caution and restraint, not only for his own well-being, but for the way in which he represented Canada, as well. He said, “[B]ecause I understand U.S. military systems ... I’ve been very deliberate in my actions ... as a liaison officer, you’re a guest in the organization, so you don’t want to do anything to raise anyone’s profile in a negative way.” Yet his restraint should not be mistaken for timidity or shame in himself, for he firmly believed his sexuality posed no embarrassment for his country, nor gave Americans reason to feel uncomfortable around him or judge the value of his work. Coming out—even in a non-combat setting—required patience and the correct timing: “[I]t’s not something that I’ve been ashamed of or ... scared of doing. It’s just that [it needs to happen] at the right time or the right moment.”

Yet the U.S. personnel with whom Edwards worked showed him more than just grudging acceptance. Not only did Edwards bring his partner to social functions, but also

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<sup>59</sup> The following discussion is based on Major Philip Edwards, interview with first author, 3 April 2002.

during work itself, colleagues included him in their conversations and asked about his partner. In addition, Edwards worked so well with some of his heterosexual military colleagues that they developed friendships outside of the office. When asked if he experienced any conflicts specifically with the U.S. military personnel with whom he worked, Edwards replied, “Not really, actually. A couple of them ... who are straight have turned into some very good drinking buddies. I guess if you can do that outside of work hours, then I would I think that hasn’t had much effect.” Edwards concluded that “My experience has been that it [his sexual orientation] has really been a non-issue.”

Edwards’s extended service as a liaison officer in the U.S. earned him excellent evaluations from both U.S. and Canadian military officials. A retired U.S. Air Force Lieutenant-General who worked with Edwards issued him a Certificate of Appreciation, which recognized his “valuable and outstanding contributions” and “ceaseless efforts to promote and enhance the close collaboration” with Canada.<sup>60</sup> His annual evaluation also praised him: “Major Edwards has experienced outstanding success as an LO [Liaison Officer] during his tour ... He has developed into a consummate diplomat, a skilled networker. He is an exemplary worker, a self-starter, who sets a high bar in personal conduct.”<sup>61</sup> Being open about his sexual orientation while serving with U.S. personnel did nothing to impede his successful performance, nor did it affect the recommendation of his promotion to Lieutenant-Colonel.

*First Lieutenant Joop Neijenhuijzen, Royal Marechaussee, Dutch Department of Defense*

From August 1992, to February 1993, First Lieutenant Joop Neijenhuijzen served as Deputy Provost Marshall in the Military Force Police in the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) in the Sinai. He was stationed in the South Camp, and most of the personnel in his barracks were from the United States. He commanded a small Dutch contingent of military police, which unlike the military police in the U.S. armed forces is distinct from the regular Dutch military.

In 1981 Egypt, Israel, and the United States created the MFO to ensure that the Camp David Accords, the peace agreements that signaled the end of the Yom Kippur War, would be upheld. The precursor to the MFO was under a UN mandate, but political differences between the U.S. and the Soviet Union prompted the U.S.S.R to block the extension of UNEF II, which in turn prompted the U.S. to develop the MFO, a peacekeeping operation independent of the UN. Based in Rome, it has its own civilian director general and forces comprised initially of infantry battalions from the United States, Fiji, and Colombia. Since its inception, the U.S. has continued its involvement, and the Netherlands, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Uruguay also have contributed forces. Primarily an observer mission, the MFO acts as an impartial authority and diplomatic arbitrator.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Certificate of Appreciation, issued to Major Philip Edwards, July 2002.

<sup>61</sup> Personnel Evaluation Report 2001/02, issued to Major Philip Edwards, 25 April 2002.

<sup>62</sup> See David R. Segal and Ronald B. Tiggler, “Attitudes of Citizen-Soldiers Toward Military Missions in the Post-Cold War World,” *Armed Forces and Society* 23 (1997): 373-90; and David R. Segal and Mady Wechsler Segal, *Peacekeepers and Their Wives* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993).

For the most part, personnel from different national contingents do not work closely together at MFO.<sup>63</sup> But throughout his service in the Sinai, Neijenhuijzen did interact with U.S. personnel and faced ongoing difficulties in working with them. Describing the conflict in terms of the U.S. service members' unwillingness to comply with international standards, he emphasized how he attempted to cooperate with them, and how they failed to reciprocate:

I tried to work together, because [the] military police [should have been] seventeen people ... and I had only five, and I want[ed] to make a mix of the teams. But they have to work on the standard operation procedure. And that was the problem. They won't cooperate, but the only one who's cooperating was me, but not the Americans.<sup>64</sup>

From his vantage point, Neijenhuijzen thought that the U.S. military police did not understand their proper role in the MFO, nor how to meet the goals of the mission according to standards set by the headquarters staff. Neijenhuijzen also attributes American resistance to U.S. service members' impression that the Dutch force commander was biased against them. Neijenhuijzen observed,

Although [the US military police] thought, "Oh, because he's Dutch, these are the rules that you made." And I never could explain ... really who made this kind of rules, because it was Israel, Egypt, America, and some other countries ... Also America make this rule, I say. It's not Holland ... and all the time they [U.S. personnel] try to make the rules to what they want to be ...

As Neijenhuijzen admitted, "It was for me not a happy time," and this conflict was never resolved adequately during his tour of duty.

During Neijenhuijzen's service in Sinai, the U.S. Congress enacted the then-new Don't Ask, Don't Tell law. Prior to his deployment in the Sinai, Neijenhuijzen had served without incident as an openly gay police force member in the Netherlands. Among Dutch personnel in Sinai, he said, "I was really open. I could be clear about everything." But Neijenhuijzen exercised greater discretion with U.S. personnel. He felt he should not reveal his sexual orientation "to the Americans, because they have the Don't Ask, Don't Tell [policy], and we have to respect this."

Yet Neijenhuijzen's discretion did not keep his sexual orientation secret from the Americans. "There was an [American] investigator," he said, "and we had some investigations. He came in my room in the barracks, and at that time I had my boyfriend's picture on my desk. He came inside, he looked to it, and he didn't ask." Neijenhuijzen suspects that this incident explains how U.S. personnel discovered that he was gay. Subsequently, Neijenhuijzen felt pressure from U.S. personnel to admit that he was gay, but in the context of other problems he was facing with American service members, as well as his confusion as to what would happen if he did acknowledge his sexual orientation, Neijenhuijzen resisted doing so:

Yes, they must be aware about my sexual orientation, because they sometimes try to ... they want [me] to say actually, "I'm gay," but I don't

<sup>63</sup> David R. Segal, email to first author, 17 July 2002.

<sup>64</sup> The following discussion is based on First Lieutenant Joop Neijenhuijzen, interview with first author, 15 May 2002.

want to say “I’m gay,” because I want to respect the rules of America ... But because the problems I had with the operational procedures, I had the really strong feeling [that] they want to put me out ... My chief ... didn’t like this at all. He say, “Joop, be quiet, because I don’t want to have problems with the Americans.” So [if] I choose to really say, “Hello, I’m gay,” then they have a reason to put me out and bring me to North Camp...

By the time of his interview for this study, Neijenhuijzen knew that the U.S. policy towards gays would not have resulted in his dismissal from a multinational force. But at the time of his deployment in the Sinai, he was not as confident. And given the conflict that already existed with Americans in the unit, he believed that their attitudes toward homosexuality could provide them with an additional reason to question his authority.

This case study illustrates that difficulties can emerge when openly gay service members from non-American countries work with U.S. personnel in a multinational peacekeeping operation. Some might interpret this case study as an illustration of how the mere presence of an openly gay service member can erode unit effectiveness. Neijenhuijzen, by contrast, believes that the Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell policy facilitated U.S. service members’ ability to question his authority, especially given the prior conflict between the Dutch military force police and U.S. contingent. According to Neijenhuijzen, the primary difficulty between him and his American colleagues was not his sexual orientation or even what the U.S. personnel thought of it, but rather their insistence on deviating from standard operating procedures stipulated by the Multinational Force and Observers Headquarters in Rome.

*Petty Officer Writer Stuart O’Brien, Royal Australian Navy*

For four months in 1999, Petty Officer Writer Stuart O’Brien served aboard the HMAS Melbourne in the Persian Gulf alongside U.S. and British ships. Operating under a UN mandate, these ships boarded Iraqi vessels suspected of breaching UN sanctions. During the operation a small group of U.S. sailors remained on O’Brien’s ship to train Australian service members. As well, additional American personnel boarded O’Brien’s ship weekly and spent time with O’Brien and his Australian colleagues.

O’Brien characterized relations between U.S. and Australian personnel as quite good: “There were no dramas whatsoever.”<sup>65</sup> Members from both countries worked well together, respected each other’s differences, and enjoyed the experience. Remembering time they had to socialize, O’Brien said, “We used to mix and mingle with the Americans, and there was no big dramas there. We all got along. I think they sort of realized that Australians have got a bit of a happy-go-lucky attitude ... they did enjoy our presence ... because we were laid back. They were on edge, and it was like, well, get on with life.” Rather than causing U.S. service members to judge or think less of the Australians, their more playful attitude may have facilitated easier interactions between members of two different cultures. As O’Brien noted, “They realized that even though we are a laid back sort of people ... we do get the job done. So it was never a big issue. I think if anything it made us more approachable.”

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<sup>65</sup> The following discussion is based on Petty Officer Writer Stuart O’Brien, interview with first author, 17 July 2002.

From O'Brien's testimony it seems likely that the easy interactions between U.S. and Australian sailors also helped facilitate the U.S. sailors' ability to deal with O'Brien's sexual orientation. Using his characteristic phrase, O'Brien said that with regard to his service as an openly gay man in the Australian Navy alongside U.S. forces, "It was never any dramas there." O'Brien was comfortably out with his fellow sailors on the HMAS Melbourne, and he says that U.S. personnel who boarded his ship "knew exactly who I was ... because everybody did on the ship, so it wasn't a secret and it wasn't hidden or anything." His Australian colleagues asked about his male partner in front of U.S. service members and made other references to his sexuality—all without causing any negative responses among Americans who spent time on the Australian ship.

O'Brien clearly knew that even if problems had emerged between him and a U.S. service member, his position was not threatened. If conflicts had developed, he said, "We basically draw the line and say, 'We're here to do a job.' Everything else gets left behind." If a problem had persisted, then he would have outlined possible steps, including replacing himself for that specific task, or replacing the U.S. service member. He notes that "It's an individual thing, and if I can deal with it, then it's fine. If the other person can't, then they're the one that needs to fix the problem." Even though he expressed willingness to work with U.S. personnel uncomfortable serving with an openly gay man, no U.S. service members complained or expressed any concern about working with O'Brien; everyone was able to focus on getting the job done. During the interview, he repeatedly emphasized that focusing on common goals helped the sailors negotiate cultural differences: "We're in different navies, but we're here to do the same job. So it's not an issue, and it shouldn't be an issue."

In addition to serving with heterosexual American sailors, O'Brien worked closely with a U.S. sailor who revealed that he was gay to a small group of Australians. O'Brien recalled, "We came across one of the U.S. guys we had on board, who was actually gay and did come out to small group of us." O'Brien commented that the gay U.S. sailor felt comfortable in doing so [coming out], and he realized that we were so laid back and didn't really care, and it wasn't an issue for us. That he was comfortable in discussing that with us, whereas with his own people, with the American fellows, he would not have mentioned it at all for fear of repercussions.

O'Brien's presence in the operations did not threaten unit cohesion or the mission's success, and O'Brien believed that he contributed to the successful collaboration among Americans and Australians. His commanders concurred, for shortly thereafter, they promoted him from Leading Seaman to Petty Officer. As he observed, "I went from a ship to an admiral's office, so I was doing something right."

#### *Lieutenant Rolf Kurth, Royal Navy*

Lieutenant Rolf Kurth joined the Royal Navy in 1990 and served until 1997 when he was discharged for homosexuality.<sup>66</sup> After nearly four years in civilian life, Kurth was invited to rejoin the navy after the British government lifted its gay ban to comply with a

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<sup>66</sup> The following discussion is based on Lieutenant Rolf Kurth, interview with second author, 3 October 2003.



ruling of the European Court of Human Rights.<sup>67</sup> Kurth re-enlisted in 2001, and in January 2003 he passed the Principle Warfare Officers' course, graduating in the top of his class. After completing the course, he joined the Royal Navy's largest amphibious ship. This ship, which for security purposes will be referred to as SHIP A, was deployed in the Gulf throughout the recent war against Iraq. During the latter stages of the conflict, Kurth's ship took over the command function of a high-profile Royal Navy ship, which will be referred to as SHIP B.

While numerous U.S. sailors served onboard SHIP A, Kurth worked closely with a team of six Americans. Kurth's team, which consisted of two officers, one chief petty officer and three petty officers, joined the ship to help manage relations with American forces. Kurth explained, "In the beginning, SHIP B, was in charge. SHIP B left the Gulf and left SHIP A in charge. When they did, this team transferred from SHIP B to SHIP A. They were a team of liaison people who helped us integrate with the American forces." Regarding his relationship with the American team, Kurth commented, "I was their direct link to the ship on day-to-day work matters, but not administratively ... [I]n actual operations, what we were doing, they would always come directly to me if they needed anything. Because we had that sort of relationship, we talked all the time and I felt that I got along very well with them."

When asked which members of the US team were aware of his sexual orientation, Kurth replied that "it is fairly well known around the entire ship ... because I am the only openly gay man on board the ship and at the time there were well over a thousand people onboard—you can imagine a ship at sea, doing the same thing over and over, in an environment that is quite tense but also quite boring, if nothing is happening people talk and if there is a little bit of gossip, it goes around very quickly." When pressed in a subsequent email to explain how he knew that Americans were aware of his sexual orientation, Kurth wrote,

[M]y sexual orientation was common knowledge and comments are often made in the mess, VERY subtly, that make it very clear that people are aware. For example, when men are sitting around looking at a pretty girl in the newspaper or on TV, sometimes someone will make a comment like "Well, you're not the best person to judge!" or "Like you'd know!"

Kurth spoke in positive terms about his interaction with the US officers in the team: "The working relationship with them was great, and I got along very well with them." When asked if these officers reacted towards him differently from his British colleagues, he responded: "No, they didn't behave any differently than British colleagues. They were very friendly."

### **Synthesis and conclusions**

Viewed collectively, the evidence presented in this study suggests that the presence of openly gay and lesbian personnel in multinational units in which Americans serve has not had a negative impact upon cohesion or military performance. Perhaps more importantly, it is an issue that has generated little attention, as one official with the

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<sup>67</sup> See Aaron Belkin and R.L. Evans, "The Effects of Including Gay and Lesbian Soldiers in the British Armed Forces: Appraising the Evidence" (Santa Barbara, CA: The Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military, 2000), posted at [www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu/Publications/PublicationsHome.htm](http://www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu/Publications/PublicationsHome.htm).

UN DKO observed: “[I am] just not aware of any instances of sexual orientation becoming an issue in the field.”<sup>68</sup> Experts from NATO, NORAD, the UN, and scholars who have studied these organizations all express similar observations. No one consulted for this study could think of an instance in which an openly gay or lesbian service member undermined a unit’s ability to complete its mission.

Four of the five case studies illustrate this conclusion clearly, but the fifth case study calls for additional commentary. First Lieutenant Joop Neijenhuijzen did experience difficulties in his unit. Unlike other service members discussed in this study, Neijenhuijzen was not fully candid about his sexual orientation with U.S. personnel. And, Neijenhuijzen served in a multinational unit ten years ago, while others served more recently. While Neijenhuijzen’s and his unit managed to accomplish their mission, conditions were more tense than ideally would have been the case. Neijenhuijzen’s example seems to confirm that strong and clear leadership is necessary for preventing problems and managing them should they emerge. In the absence of such leadership, units such as Neijenhuijzen’s tend to under-perform.

Scholars who study cultural diversity and multinational units all suggest that improving multinational operations requires addressing many problems that are more pressing than divergent sexual orientation policies. Homosexuality simply does not rank as a problem that presents much difficulty. For instance, Moskos’ suggests that disparity in income, health insurance, English-language competency, accountability, and civilian military relations are the most important issues.<sup>69</sup> For the UN, tensions between the militaries of developing and developed nations warrant much more attention, as does the integration of women in peacekeeping operations. And as has been made evident, NATO still struggles to initiate standardization programs for defense materials. Addressing the issue of homosexuality is simply not a priority.<sup>70</sup> And for both NATO and the UN, more general concerns about command and control issues far outweigh the issue of homosexuality.

Finally, scholars may debate the extent to which findings from this study may or may not be relevant for assessing the plausibility of the unit cohesion rationale, the notion that the presence of openly gay service members disrupts unit cohesion. On the one hand, the international setting itself may help explain why homosexual personnel do not disrupt multinational units. A number of experts discussed the diplomatic nature of personnel in multinational environments. As Thomas-Durrell Young observes, “When you’re working in [a multinational military] environment ... as you go up the chain [it] becomes excessively polite.”<sup>71</sup> In places like NATO headquarters, derogative comments about someone’s sexual orientation become less and less likely; it would be improper for anyone, regardless of their personal opinions, to cause problems because of it.<sup>72</sup> Many personnel who serve in multinational operations do so on a voluntary basis, and scholars have suggested that such personnel may display greater tolerance toward diversity. On

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<sup>68</sup> Kuhl, email.

<sup>69</sup> Moskos, 14.

<sup>70</sup> Young, interview.

<sup>71</sup> Young, interview.

<sup>72</sup> Moskos notes that in general “the level of respect and cordiality between the officers of the various nationalities at SHAPE is remarkably high” (13).

the other hand, one underlying premise of the unit cohesion rationale is that American service members do not like gays and lesbians and cannot form bonds of trust with them that are necessary for promoting and sustaining military effectiveness. Evidence presented in this study, however, indicates that American personnel serving in multinational units have worked quite closely and effectively with openly gay service members from foreign countries, and that integrated service has not compromised the effectiveness of military units.

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