

**NEWS CONFERENCE ON OPPOSITION  
TO "DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL" POLICY  
FOR GAYS IN THE MILITARY  
(July 16, 1993)**

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REPRESENTATIVE CLIFF STEARNS (R-FL)  
REPRESENTATIVE SAM JOHNSON, (R-TX)  
GENERAL HULTMAN, RESERVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION  
GENERAL BILL SMITH, VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS (VFW)  
GLENN ARNETT (SP), FLEET RESERVE ASSOCIATION  
GENERAL HUGH OVERHOLT, FORMER ARMY JUDGE  
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REP. HUNTER: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I'm Duncan Hunter. I'm a member of the House Republican leadership and the President of the American Security Council. And, on the Republican side and with many veteran's groups located in Washington, we have been watching as the Department of Defense has been working up this policy change on homosexuals in the military, moving the change to the White House. We understand the President now has it. And we want to make a response to this degradation of the present policy. I think our point is -- and we've talked to a number of legal analysts -- that we think that the Clinton Administration is dedicated to a strategy of opening the door a little bit by changing the policy to a slight degree, creating a preferential class by mentioning homosexual orientation as being something that the military can live with and then allowing the courts to basically drive a truck through that opening, ultimately resulting in the accession of large numbers of homosexuals into the armed forces of the United States. For that reason, we are strongly -- on the Republican side, we are strongly against lifting of the present ban. And we do not want to see the argument here deteriorate into a lawyers battle over what might happen in court should the ban be change, be watered down. As a result of that, we are going to be fighting strongly in the next several weeks -- and that includes the American Security Council, a large number of veteran's organizations. We stand strongly with the American Legion, with the VFW for keeping the present ban in place. And we would urge the American people not to be fooled when some of the lawyers from the White House tell you that you have almost a complete ban, but that it does make a few changes. What they aren't telling you is that you already have lawyers on the other side deciding how they're going to be able to exploit those changes in court and ultimately move large numbers of homosexuals into the military population. And speaking personally, I've listened to the testimony by homosexuals. I've listen to their claims that they can serve in close, intimate, private quarters, with young teenage men and women in uniform for long periods of time, and that they should be allowed to do that. They think they can do their job. I have looked at that, and I've listened also to the young people who serve in uniform presently. And one factor that we on the Republican side are taking into consideration is that about 99 percent of the young people in uniform who have responded to our polls and surveys say they do not want to be serving -- forced to serve in intimate situations with homosexuals. We think we need to be sensitive to the young men and women -- many of them teenagers -- who serve in our military. Having said that, let me turn over the forum to Cliff Stearns, who is the Chairman of the Task Force on Military Personnel for the Republican leadership, and who has conducted four extensive hearings on this subject.

REP. STEARNS: I want to thank you very much, my colleague from California who has been a leader in this area. I'm Cliff Stearns. I'm from Ocala, Florida -- that's my home. And my district runs from Orlando up to western Jacksonville. There's three points I wanted to make this morning. The fight has just begun. The Clinton Administration is shifting this problem now over to Congress. We had a meeting earlier this morning of almost 30 independent groups, all involved -- there's unprecedented cooperation between all of these groups -- the American Legion, the VFW, the Fleet Reserve Association, who incidentally gave me 21,000 petitions a couple of days ago in full support of not changing this ban -- no compromise. So, at this point we

have the fight beginning. It's moving to Congress. And I think members of Congress should look very carefully -- as my colleague Duncan Hunter said, if there's any change, it's going to end up in court. And we're going to have, quote, "the traditional mischief" that starts in litigation, if we have a compromise. The last thing I'd like to point out is, the level of cultural response in this country is changing dramatically. What we see here is a constant re-definition of what is right and what is wrong. And now, abnormal and deviant behavior is accepted in our community. The Clinton Administration is pushing this forward in the military. Yet, the vast majority of Americans don't agree, and all the petitions and all these organizations affiliated with the military also don't agree. The Clinton Administration has not made an argument why it has to be changed. And with that, I'll return the microphone to Sam Johnson, an outstanding Congressman from Texas.

REP. JOHNSON: Thank you, Cliff. Sam Johnson, representing Dallas. I thank my colleagues from California and Florida. I guess between the three of us, we've probably got as much military stationed in our states as anyone. And I'll tell you what, this is not a compromise. There's no such thing as a compromise. You in the media have made it sound like a compromise. The only compromise out there is between President Clinton and our Secretary of Defense. Even the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the other military advisers are not being listened to. President Clinton is trying to make this change and call it a compromise, and, in fact, he is not listening to the 99 percent majority of Americans who don't want it. The military, in my view, is working good. And as Cliff said, "If it ain't broke, let's don't fix it. Anything that disrupts the cohesion of a combat unit is ultimately detrimental to the safety and well being of the people of the US Armed Forces and America, which they are supposed to protect. We can't stand for any changes in our policy regarding homosexual behavior. Thank you.

Q Mr. Hunter, if --

REP. HUNTER: Let me get to a few other speakers here first. Incidentally, I wanted to mention that Sam Johnson is a former prisoner-of-war, one of the most heavily decorated members who has ever served in the United States Congress. We'd now like to ask Evan Hultman -- General Evan Hultman, who represents the Reserve Officers Association.

GEN. HULTMAN: Thank you, Congressman. I think we ought to make it very clear at the outset, as did my association -- which is located on the corner at Number 1, Constitution -- that we are dealing with an issue. We are dealing with an issue. And thus, two years ago in June, the membership of the Reserve Officers Association -- before this became a political issue in political terms -- went on record, almost unanimously, that we wanted to keep the present set of circumstances in place, because it has worked, because the bottom line is readiness of our military. And to the degree that we move off of that issue and that question, then we're not dealing honestly and fairly with this issue. And so, the Reserve Officer's Association, two years ago in June, went on record of keeping the ban as it is at the present moment -- for one reason and one reason alone, because the Association is made up of Republicans and Democrats and Independents in a Charter from the Congress that says, we have the responsibility to keep the nation militarily strong. Nothing to do with political parties, but to deal with an issue. And so, that's why again, in our most recent meeting, the Reserve Officers Association of the United States -- men and women from the bottom up, throughout the United States of America -- again voted almost unanimously that in the interest of readiness of our military -- at a time when we are coming down, and in the use of the taxpayers dollars, have got to be more careful and use those dollars better -- we cannot risk anything that will interfere with this readiness of our military. So, that's the basis for which all of us in these associations stand, because we are dealing with the readiness of our military and our nation. Thank you.

GEN. SMITH: Thank you. General Bill Smith, VFW. Last August, at our national convention of the 2.2 million members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, a resolution was passed which supports the current ban on homosexuals in the military. In the past several weeks and several months, there's been a lot of discussion that has come forward which will undermine what we feel is the unit effectiveness and the efficiency of the military and the readiness. And for that reason, we stand by our resolution -- keep the ban in place.

REP. HUNTER: Thank you very much, Bill. And now, representing the Fleet Reserve, the Association that

delivered the 21,000 responses from enlisted people presently serving in the military against lifting the ban,  
Glenn Arnett

MR. ARNETT: I am Glenn Arnett, director of -- (inaudible) -- programs for the Fleet Reserve Association. We conducted a survey across the country of major military naval installations speaking with active duty enlisted members of the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard, and asked their opinions about lifting the ban on homosexuals within the military. Ninety-eight percent of those stated that they did not want to see the lifting of that ban. And, indeed, 21,000 signed their names to petitions, which we delivered to Mr. Stearns on Wednesday of this week stating that very position. It's ironic, or seems a little bit troubling and distressing to us that, of all of the people that they've gone out to talk to and seek the input from, the very people that they have not asked or do not seek the opinions of is the junior enlisted personnel who will be most effected by this lifting of the ban. Therefore, I think it needs a little more scrutiny before this is put into place and their opinions need to be indeed heard and listened to.

REP. HUNTER: Thank you, Glenn. And we'd be happy to open up for questions. And let's start right here.

Q Mr. Hunter, if the Joint Chiefs sign on to what ever the President recommends next week, are the Republicans intending then to go ahead and try to force a vote in Congress on this anyway?

REP. HUNTER: Well, I think the first thing we should do is define sign on. It's clear that the Joint Chiefs haven't, on their own initiative, decided to allow homosexuals into the military. They've been ordered by their Commander-in Chief -- their civilian leader, their superior -- to draft a policy that will, to some degree, accommodate this homosexual initiative. So, they haven't signed on. And I think if you listen to -- if you look at the letters of Colin Powell to Congresswoman Pat Schroeder, where he said that homosexuality is incompatible with military service, and offered no compromise. It's fairly clear where the Joint Chiefs stand with respect to their personal views. So, if you're asking me, if the President orders his Joint Chiefs -- which he has done -- to draft him a policy that accommodates his views, my answer to you is that that's why we have a democracy. That's why we have literally hundreds of thousands of American veterans and families who believe in the US military, who regard it as our most important and most honorable institution, and who go out and make their political will known to civilian political leaders. You can't expect the Joint Chiefs to disobey a direct order. They've been taught for many years not to do that. So, my answer to you is, that I think they've made their point very clearly, and those points are, I think, most eloquently manifested in Colin Powell's statements on this issue. And I think that we should take those initial statements -- we know where they stand -- and we should go out and activate people who can speak out -- that is, retired military people and families who have young men and women, many of them teenagers, in the military right now, and ask them to make their points known.

Q Congressman Hunter, none of them seems ready to resign?

Q Can we place a camera --

REP. HUNTER: Certainly.

Q Congressman, none of them seems ready to resign over their differences with the President.

REP. HUNTER: Well, I don't think -- it's not fair -- even if a Joint Chief resigns over a difference with the President, he still is mandated by the Constitution to carry out the direct order that the President has given him. Now, these Joint Chiefs have done far more than any body of Joint Chiefs I've ever seen, in terms of strongly resisting their direct superior. So, they've made their point known to the American people. They've given leadership to the American people. And it's up to those people who are retired, who can speak out against this policy change as citizens. This is a democracy. And this is the time for citizens to start speaking out and to make their points known to their representatives.

Q If the Joint Chiefs sign on, would you have the votes to codify the existing ban -- (inaudible) -- ban?

REP. HUNTER: I think that we will have the votes to keep the ban in place. I think the ban has been defined

by both sides as something that exists. The proponents of the ban are able to point to a very effective military that has operated under the ban, that has won major conflicts, that has been more ready perhaps than any military in recent history. I think the opponents of the bans -- the homosexual group -- have attacked the ban at every opportunity. The American people know what the ban is. It's in place. And I don't think they're going to take some substitute for the ban -- some watered down version -- that will be a nightmare for our military to administer -- for the troop commanders, for company commanders, for platoon leaders, for squad leaders to administer, and will also be a hay-day for lawyers in the courts. I don't think the American people want to turn our military into a lawyers paradise. They want to see the military win wars. And I think they're going to support this ban. And I think we will have a majority -- both in the House Armed Services Committee and in the full House -- to keep the ban in place.

Q Do you feel the Joint Chiefs have been ignored on this issue?

REP. HUNTER: Well, the Joint Chiefs obviously have been ignored on this issue to the extent that they have voiced to the President, when he first brought this issue up, their very strong resistance. And if anybody hasn't seen that, they obviously haven't been in the country for the last six or seven months. So, the Joint Chiefs did what they were supposed to do as good soldiers. They've voiced their resistance. They've written some very eloquent statements explaining their resistance to lifting this ban. And they've been ordered by their Commander-in Chief to put together a policy that accommodates him and accommodates the groups that gave him \$3 million in the campaign. And their job is not to ask whether campaign contributions are a justification for change of a major policy. Their duty is to salute their Commander-in Chief and do what he tells them.

Q Do you and the others --

Q General Smith?

REP. HUNTER: Right here.

Q General Smith, what is the danger here? Do you think the President is inclined to push his social agenda into the military? What do your members feel about that?

GEN. SMITH: The policy that's been in place -- the ban that has been on record with us for well over 50 years right now -- has served us well. It has effected our military readiness, our unit effectiveness, and there's no reason to change it. The compromise that we're talking about right now simply undermines that policy that we have, and would create turmoil within the military. We're talking about readiness, effectiveness in the military -- as the members of Congress just mentioned. And that's what we're concerned about -- keeping that readiness that we've attained in place.

GEN. HULTMAN: Could I respond to a basic issue you've been dealing with? And that is, that compromise is not in the interest of those who wish to push their position as homosexuals or certainly in the position that we believe as military. And I think that's been overlooked. I think if you would ask the gay community whether or not they wish this compromise, I think you will hear as loud and as clear as you are hearing from us, that they likewise feel this is not in the interest of the defense of this country and this nation. But somehow, once we get into the political arena, then we start dealing with compromises. And so, we say, we must attack and discuss and debate the fundamental issue on the merits of it, and not something halfway in between -- because that's not in the interest of anyone. And it certainly is not in the interest of the readiness of our military.

Q Congressman, all of you speakers -- the speakers have talked about the overwhelming majority are opposed to this thing. Polls have also shown the American public is just about evenly split. What are you going to do to try to change that, if anything? You may have the military on your side, but the American people still own this military. What are you going to do to get their -- (off mike)?

REP. HUNTER: Well, I disagree with you, Otto, in that the recent polls that have been taken show that a majority of the general population are in favor of keeping the ban in place. But I think that beyond that --

Q (Inaudible)?

REP. HUNTER: I think that beyond that, the American people support very much the 18 and 19 year old kids who have to live in intimate circumstances with their bunk mate for five and six months at a time. And the polls that have come back from active duty military -- the first of which was taken by the Los Angeles Times -- that showed, as I recall, in excess of 70 -- between 70 and 80 percent of our young enlisted people not wanting to see the ban removed. And then, the poll that we took about three weeks ago, in which we asked 621 active general and flag officers -- active duty people who had to go directly against their boss, President Clinton -- saying that they were against lifting the ban. And a number of them, as you know, signing their names to this statement. Now, I've never seen a stronger statement made in contravention of the Commander-in-Chief's position. So, I think that the American people are going to listen to the young men and women in uniform. And as one of -- as even mentioned, that's the one group that hasn't been listened to. Our kids who are serving, who can't quit, can't go home -- because if they do, that's desertion -- and have to live in close quarters, intimate circumstances with their bunk mates for long periods of time. And I think that is the case that will be made to the American people. I think in the end, if the American people have to listen to their own young men and women who are in uniform who don't want this ban lifted, or listen to liberal politicians and political activists in Washington, DC -- I think their going to pick their own kids.

Q How will you achieve this in a Democratic Congress? You're a minority. How are you're going to --

REP. STEARNS: Let me just say one quick thing in reference to your question. Regardless of what the polls say today, as it moves to Congress and we have an open debate -- and I hope, God willing, we have a vote on the House floor for codification of not lifting the ban -- we're going to bring out the whole ramifications in what this means in terms of the legal system. And what we think ultimately, we're going to have an affirmative action created for a class of people in the military. And that will be brought out in the debate. And that's the question the American people have to decide. Do you want an affirmative action created for a certain class of people. So, we're going to point out, again and again, the legal ramifications -- as I mentioned earlier -- the, quote, "traditional mischief" that's going to be created in the courts. And why do we need it? There's been no case to show that we need to change anything.

Q The Gay Rights Committee is already running television ads pushing their side of it. Is -- (inaudible) -- organization prepared to respond?

REP. HUNTER: Yes, the American Security Council has run political advertisement or electronic advertisements in about 1,000 different media markets. And they are going to be moving forward, responding to the homosexual activist community. I think that the point has been made -- the point was made with President Clinton when they gave him \$3 million -- when the homosexuals gave him \$3 million. They have a lot of money. And what we're going to have to do is go back to our veterans -- who have been responding, who have been contributing, so that we could put ads in -- and ask America's veteran community and the families who care about our military and about the young people in the military to respond, because we obviously can't have -- as in a political campaign, you can't have a dark screen while the other guy is out there running ads. So, we are going to continue to do that, but we have put thousands of ads on television and radio to date. Yes, sir. Right here.

Q I just wanted to follow -- you're a minority in a Democratic Congress. How do you hope to achieve this, both tactically within the House and also more generally -- (off mike)?

REP. HUNTER: Well, I think the President, who's understood now with his tax bills and his spending bills, that simply having a majority of his own party doesn't mean he's going to win. And the voice of the American people is what stopped him in the first place. I think he thought this would be a very painless policy change, and it turned out that he underestimated how deeply the American people hold their military institution, and how much they respect their American military institution, and how much they care about their kids who are in the military. And I think those same compelling factors are going to be important to Democrats in the House of Representatives and Democrats in the Senate, just as they are with Republicans.

Q Congressman, you know, if the basic policy remains in place -- assuming that the behavior of gays will not be accepted in an open fashion while they're on duty -- you're talking about reaction from straight people that are in the Armed Forces. So, why is it so unrealistic to accept this kind of a watered down compromise -- since you're talking about straight people picking on gay people, not gay people doing anything -- (off mike)?

REP. HUNTER: Okay. It's a little tough to sort out your question, but I think the point that is made -- and I think it's made by Janet Reno, if you read the articles about her analysis of this policy change -- is that this policy change that will say we will continue to have a policy of exclusion of homosexuals in the military -- with respect to homosexual activity, but then we'll say good things about homosexual orientation, that that policy is going to create such a conflict that company commanders are just going to throw their hands up in the air when they're asked about a particular situation with a particular individual, and trying to analyze that and decide whether prosecute or whether to have any disciplinary action at all, whether to try to move the young person -- the military personnel out. It's going to be a paradise for lawyers. That's a consensus with our legal analysis. It's going to be a paradise for lawyers. It's going to be a nightmare for our military people - officers and especially sergeants and NCO who have to implement this policy. So, we're creating a giant quagmire. And I think Janet Reno has spoken to that. From the reports that I've seen, she says it's going to be very difficult to implement this policy.

Q Are you saying that you have seen the policy and that it says in there that there are good things about sexual orientation --

REP. HUNTER: Well, no. We're going on -- we have -- the President has not issued the official policy yet. If it is consistent with previous memoranda that have been released, it is going to say to the effect that sexual orientation is a matter of privacy. Now, that's going to mean that when a company commander or a platoon sergeant has a certain action that's been taken or something that's been reported to him, he is going to be in an absolute quandary as to what he does. What if it's a statement made to one person by another person? Does that mean that he suppresses the evidence and doesn't use it? Does that mean that he goes forward with the prosecution? Does that mean that he goes forward with expulsion? We're muddying the waters and we're going to create a, again, paradise for attorneys -- which our military is not intended to be. The military is intended to function effectively and to be combat ready. And we're moving away from combat readiness. We're going to hurt combat readiness by creating this muddle.

Q So, are you saying that this is too much work to implement -- (inaudible) -- the military?

REP. HUNTER: Well, let me put it this way. The work of the military is to win wars. And the consensus of our senior military officers -- 621 of whom responded to this -- and our enlisted, NCOs, and our enlisted people, is that this is going to very much damage their ability to do the one job that they are given by the American people -- and that's winning wars. And ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much.