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British study finds no problem with gay military personnel

Gay submarine officer to address conference

by David Perry
Special to Q-Notes

SANTA BARBARA, CA — A classified report by the British Ministry of Defense is one of two new studies to conclude that London's January, 2000 decision to lift its gay ban has not harmed military performance, cohesion, or recruitment. The Ministry of Defense has not yet acknowledged the existence of the report publicly but Ministry officials released a summary of its findings to researchers at the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military (CSSMM) at the University of California, Santa Barbara. That summary is available at www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu.

The classified Ministry report marks the first comprehensive assessment of the lifting of the British gay ban. A source who had access to the original, unabridged report told CSSMM researchers that "The report looked at all aspects, operational effectiveness, unit cohesion, and there has been no impact." Martin Fuller, Director of Personnel at the Defense Ministry, confirmed that "we've had very few real problems that have emerged."

Results of the classified report are consistent with a 70-page University of California study released in November that finds that Britain's decision to lift its gay ban has not harmed the military.

The University of California study is based on a review of 101 articles, book chapters, and documents and interviews with 25 academic experts, military officials, soldiers, and journalists and it is available at www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu.

Prior to London's decision to lift its ban, Pentagon officials often cited the British case to justify their claim that US military performance would suffer if gay soldiers were allowed to serve openly. A copy of the summary of the classified Ministry report and the University of California study have been sent by Federal Express and received by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs.

Both the Ministry report and the University of California study will be addressed at a December 9 conference in San Francisco. The conference, titled "Don't Ask, Don't Tell: Is the Gay Ban Based on Prejudice or Military Necessity?" will include Rob Nunn, an openly gay officer on a British submarine.

Twenty-three nations currently allow gay soldiers to serve openly. According to CSSMM director Aaron Belkin, "the new studies of the British military are embarrassing to the Pentagon. After years of referring to the British gay ban to rationalize its own practice of firing homosexual soldiers, two comprehensive studies now show that the lifting of the British ban has not had any of the negative consequences that military leaders predicted." ▼



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