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Vice President Al Gore

DURHAM, NH—During the fourth Democratic debate held at the University of New Hampshire, both Vice President Al Gore and his Democratic opponent, former NJ Senator Bill Bradley, said that if they were elected president they would require their appointees to the Joint Chiefs of Staff to fully support allowing gays to serve openly in the military.

Their remarks were made in response to a question of whether they would support a "litmus test" on gays in the military in nominating members of the Joint Chiefs.

Gore went further than Bradley, saying he wanted to make the same changes toward allowing gays to serve openly that President Harry S. Truman made toward racially integrating the armed forces.

"I think that would require those who wanted to serve on the Joint Chiefs to be in agreement with that policy," Gore said. "I would insist before appointing anybody to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that that individual sup-

Gays In The Military

Gore and Bradley endorse gays in the military and come under fire

port my policy, and yes, I would make that a requirement."

Gore drew a distinction between applying a litmus test to Supreme Court justices and military officials, saying this was "not interfering with an independent judicial decision."

Bradley said simply that the commander in chief issued orders and soldiers followed them. He said that while many in the armed forces probably did not agree with Clinton on some military matters, "My sense is that when you're president of the United States, military people are loyal to their commander in chief whatever the policy of the commander in chief calls for the country, and that's what I'd expect them to do if I'm president of the United States and we move toward gays in the military."

Retired members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and other military experts warned that subjecting future members to a litmus test would hurt the armed services.

"Military officers certainly execute the orders of the president, but a litmus test beforehand would place an officer in an untenable position saying, 'Do you believe what I believe?'" commented Gen. Carl E. Mundy, a retired commandant of the Marine Corps who opposes allowing gays to serve openly.

"An officer's judgment has to be tempered by his judgment of what's best for the armed forces, not for a political agenda," Mundy said.

A recent study conducted by the Triangle Institute for Security Studies revealed that 75

percent of the up-and-coming officers polled opposed allowing gays to serve openly in the military and as many as 26 percent would leave the military if gays were allowed to serve openly.

The next day, key veterans' groups and the Republican presidential hopefuls came out against the idea that Pentagon brass would have to endorse military service by openly gay soldiers.

"We would obviously be opposed in a big way to any litmus test," said Steve Van Buskirk, spokesman for the 1.9 million-member Veterans of Foreign Wars.

"If you're going to have any test at all, it's going to be to their ability to lead and to be a straight shooter on matters affecting readiness," said Steve Thomas of the American Legion, which has 2.8 million members.

GOP Chairman Jim Nicholson — a West Point graduate and ex-Army Ranger — said, "The ridiculous litmus test that Al Gore has put forward" would have kept ex-Gen. Colin Powell from being chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

All six Republican candidates took issue with Bradley and Gore over allowing gays to declare their orientation without restraint by senior officers.

Republican Steve Forbes, the tycoon publisher, commented, "The military is not an agency for social experimentation."

Other candidates, including frontrunners George W. Bush and John McCain, said they were content with the existing policy.



Former US Senator Bill Bradley

Religious activist Gary Bauer said he would not want homosexuals in the armed forces and denounced the Democratic stance as "the most idiotic answer I have ever heard." He also charged that the Democrats were pandering to the gay-rights movement.

Two days later, Gore backpedaled on his stance. Under fire from military leaders and some of his own political allies, Gore told reporters during a new conference after a campaign rally in Des Moines, IA, "What I meant to convey was I would not tolerate, nor would any commander in chief, nor would any president tolerate orders not being followed."

"I did not mean to imply that there should ever be any kind of inquiry into the personal political opinions of officers in the US military," Gore said.

This divisive issue has assumed a political significance that could resonate through the general election, with Republicans and Democrats at odds. ▼

Second soldier in Fort Campbell murder case plea bargains down to lesser charges

by Dan Van Mourik
Q-Notes Staff

FORT CAMPBELL, KY—Army Spc. Justin R. Fisher, 26, who was charged as an accessory to murder in the beating death of Pfc. Barry Winchell, pleaded guilty to lesser charges prior to his scheduled court-martial.

Fisher admitted he lied to Army investigators and obstructed the investigation when he wiped blood from a baseball bat used by Pvt. Calvin Glover, 19, to kill Winchell. Fisher also pleaded guilty to supplying alcohol to a minor, which he did by purchasing beer for Glover.

Under the plea agreement, the Army dropped other charges, including participating as a principal to premeditated murder and acting as an accessory after the fact.

Fisher was sentenced to 12 1/2 years in prison on the lesser charges.

During sentencing, Fisher wept as he apologized to his family and to the relatives of the victim. "Barry, I hope you can hear me," Fisher stated. "I'm sorry for the part I played in this. I know you are now in a better place. I hope you know that if I could go back to the morning it happened, I would have changed it all."

Pat and Wally Kutteles, Winchell's mother and stepfather, said they could not understand how the Army could at first charge Fisher to stand trial for goading Glover to murder their son, then drop the most serious charges.

"Suddenly, the Army let him plead to nothing related to the actual murder...justice was not served today," they said in a statement.

The Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN) said the sentence is too lenient, considering that Fisher had admitted goading

Glover into attacking Winchell.

The sentence is "a travesty," said C. Dixon Osburn, co-executive director of SLDN. "We're left with huge questions about why Ft. Campbell cut this deal."

Fisher will be eligible for parole in about four years, Osburn noted.

Last month Glover was convicted of premeditated murder and sentenced to life in prison.

Keith Caruso, a defense psychiatrist with a practice in Nashville, said he diagnosed Fisher as an alcoholic with a cross-dressing fetish.

Caruso said Fisher told him he was not attracted to men but that wearing lingerie beneath his clothing aroused him and made him feel more comfortable.

The fetish apparently developed while Fisher was growing up and he noticed the closeness of his three sisters and their affectionate relationship with their mother. He longed to become "one of the girls," the psychiatrist said.

Fisher had been troubled and puzzled about his cross-dressing and his participation in the crime, and appeared to find some relief in his diagnosis, Caruso said.

The day after Fisher's sentencing, the Kutteles said they may sue the Army for failing to protect their son from anti-gay harassment. In an interview in the *Washington Post*, they said military officials at Fort Campbell did not take sufficient precautions to prevent their son's July 5 beating.

Testimony at Glover's trial indicated the victim was harassed repeatedly before his death and that base commanders did nothing to stop the badgering.

Pat Kutteles told the *Post* that commanders at the 101st Airborne Division tolerated a four-month harassment campaign against her son in clear violation of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

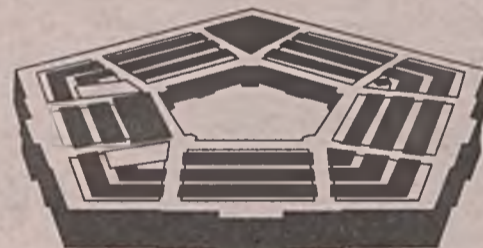
Pat Kutteles said Winchell's platoon sergeant had asked her son about his sexual orientation, but dropped the subject when he denied he was gay. At Glover's trial, the sergeant testified that he did nothing to stop the anti-gay epithets other soldiers hurled at Winchell. "Everybody was having fun," Staff Sgt. Michael Kleifgen said.

In a prepared statement, the Kutteles said, "As parents, our eyes have been opened over the past six months by the testimony in this case and by conversations with soldiers here at Ft. Campbell. We are concerned that excessive drinking continues in the barracks. We are alarmed that anti-gay harassment continues at Ft. Campbell even after Barry's murder. We are aware of soldiers who have even mocked Barry's death, making jokes about 'faggots' and baseball bats. We can't begin to tell you how dismayed and upset this makes us feel."

In response, the Army said it plans to investigate whether officers at Fort Campbell overlooked the daily harassment that trial witnesses said Winchell faced before he was killed.

The investigation by Lt. Gen. Michael W. Ackerman, the Army's inspector general, could lead to further disciplinary actions against soldiers and officers at the base.

Ackerman is also expected to investigate other aspects of discipline and leadership, including why soldiers were allowed to drink excessively and openly at their barracks with little apparent oversight or intervention. ▼



Policy on gays redefined by Pentagon

by Dan Van Mourik
Q-Notes Staff

WASHINGTON, DC—In late December, the Pentagon added "Don't Harass" to the existing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue" policy regarding gays serving in the US military. Defense Secretary William Cohen issued stronger guidance to military commanders, reminding them that harassment of gays is wrong, and that they have an obligation to take action against harassers, Pentagon spokesman Ken Bacon told reporters.

Bacon said, "Secretary Cohen believes that the description of the law passed by Congress in 1993 should be expanded from 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' to 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Harass.' And the actions that the department is taking are designed to stress the third part, 'don't harass.'"

Each time the policy was mentioned by all parties concerned, the "don't pursue" portion of the original 1993 policy was omitted. It is unclear at this point if "don't harass" is intended
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