

**This an excerpt of a book chapter by CMR President Elaine Donnelly titled “Defending the Culture of the Military,” published in May 2010 by the Air Force University Press as part of a book titled *Attitudes Are Not Free: Thinking Deeply about Diversity in the U.S. Armed Forces*. Footnotes are in sequence but different from the original text, which begins on page 249. The chapter is available at <http://books.google.com/books?id=-5FnvJEclewC&lpg=PP1&pg=PA249#v=onepage&q&f=false>.**

#### **4. Civilian Surveys and Polls**

**The Zogby/Palm Poll.** In January 2007, retired Army Gen John M. Shalikashvili, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1993 to 1997, joined the gays-in-the-military cause by writing an op-ed for publication in the *New York Times*.<sup>i</sup> The general’s article, and a second one published in 2009 in the *Washington Post*, drew attention to a December 2006 poll of 545 service members conducted by Zogby International, indicating that 73 percent of the respondents said they were “comfortable interacting with gay people.”<sup>ii</sup>

The only surprising thing about this innocuous question was that the favorable percentage was not closer to 100 percent. Virtually everyone knows and likes at least one person who is gay—but this is not the most relevant issue.

The Zogby poll asked another, more important question that was not even mentioned in the news release announcing the poll’s results: “Do you agree or disagree with allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly in the military?” On that question, 26 percent of those surveyed agreed, but 37 percent disagreed. The Zogby poll also found that 32 percent of respondents were “neutral” and only 5 percent were “not sure.”<sup>iii</sup>

If this poll were considered representative of military personnel, the 26 percent of respondents who wanted the law repealed were far fewer than the combined 69 percent of people who were opposed to or neutral on repeal. This minority opinion was hardly a mandate for radical change, but the poll has been spun and trumpeted for years as if it were.

A closer look at the Zogby poll reveals more interesting details that should have been recognized by news media people reporting on it:

- a. The news release announcing results stated, “The Zogby Interactive poll of 545 troops who served in Iraq and Afghanistan was designed in conjunction with the Michael D. Palm Center at the University of California, Santa Barbara.” Since the Palm Center paid for the survey, it is appropriate to refer to it as the Zogby/Palm poll.
- b. The methodology page stated, “Zogby International conducted interviews of 545 US Military Personnel online from a purchased list of US Military personnel [*sic*].” However, the US military does not sell or provide access to personnel lists

- to civilian pollsters or anyone else.<sup>iv</sup> The authors of a separate report analyzing the Zogby/Palm poll undermined its credibility with an honest comment: “Initial attempts to secure a list of military personnel from the Department of Defense in order to draw a random sample for this survey were unsuccessful.”<sup>v</sup>
- c. The Zogby/Palm poll further weakened its own credibility with this overstatement: “The panel used for this survey is composed of over 1 million members and correlates closely with the U.S. population on all key profiles.” If this was a reference to the US military, it was not credible for reasons stated above. If a “million-man” polling sample existed, why did it locate only 545 respondents? This sample was only slightly more than one-quarter of the number used by the *Military Times* poll described below.
  - d. The Zogby/Palm poll’s description of methodology referred to a “double opt-in format through an invitation only method.”<sup>vi</sup> The obfuscation was no substitute for the plain and conspicuously-missing word *random*. Respondents, apparently, self-selected themselves to answer a survey on gays in the military, which might have led to a disproportionately large sample of gay or liberal participants.<sup>vii</sup>
  - e. Activists frequently claim that since greater numbers of younger people are more comfortable with homosexuals, this is evidence enough to justify changing the 1993 law.<sup>viii</sup> However, personal relationships among younger people do not seem to be decisive when voters actually decide matters of policy. In 30 states, (increased in 2009 to 31) voters (as opposed to courts or legislatures) have approved referenda or other measures banning same-sex marriage, often with comfortable majorities.<sup>ix</sup>

**Civilian Polls.** Some civilian polls, such as the *Washington Post*/ABC News poll released on 19 July 2008,<sup>x</sup> have asked respondents whether gays should serve in the military “openly” or “undisclosed.”<sup>xi</sup> These questions are not on point because they focus on elements of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” administrative policy, not the consequences of repealing the law.

Such surveys also measure opinions among people who generally know as much about the military as they do about remote issues currently being debated by the Canadian Parliament. The results, therefore, are less relevant to members of Congress considering legislation to repeal the actual 1993 law.

Polling organizations recognize that respondents who believe a policy already exists are more likely to favor that policy, while those who know otherwise are less likely.<sup>xii</sup> Constant news reports suggesting that homosexuals already are in the military probably skew civilian surveys to the positive side. This is especially so when a poll asks innocuous questions about knowing or liking individual people who are gay.

**Military Times Polls.** The annual *Military Times* poll of almost 2,000 active-duty subscriber/respondents found that 58 percent opposed repeal of the 1993 law, described

as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” for four years in a row.<sup>xiii</sup> Contrary to some criticisms from activist groups, the *Military Times* editors did not imply that the survey reflected military demographics perfectly. Nor did the editors of *Military Times*, a Gannet-owned publication that has supported efforts to repeal the 1993 law, try to inflate the survey’s credibility in the same way that the Zogby/Palm poll did.

As in previous years, the *Military Times* mailed surveys to subscribers at random, but they counted only the responses from almost 2,000 active-duty military. Unlike the Zogby/Palm poll, questions on the survey covered a wide range of topics, not the gays-in-the-military issue alone.

The 2008 *Military Times* poll asked a new question that produced significant results: “If the ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy is overturned and gays are allowed to serve openly, how would you respond?” The article emphasized that 71 percent of respondents said they would continue to serve. But almost 10 percent said, “I would not re-enlist or extend my service,” and 14 percent said, “I would consider not re-enlisting or extending my service.” Only 6 percent responded “No Opinion.”

Absent unusual circumstances, the military cannot force anyone to enlist or reenlist in the volunteer force. Such results indicate potential recruiting and retention problems that could become even more difficult during a time of intense warfare or during times of economic prosperity, when a recruiter’s job is more difficult.<sup>xiv</sup>

Military professionals follow orders and honor induction contracts that do not allow them to end their military careers overnight. The gradual but persistent loss of even a few thousand careerists in grades and skills that are not quickly or easily replaceable would be devastating to the all-volunteer force.

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i. John M. Shalikashvili, op-ed, “Second Thoughts on Gays in the Military,” *New York Times*, 2 January 2007, 17; and “Gays in the Military: Let the Evidence Speak,” *Washington Post*, 19 June 2009.

ii. Zogby International, *Opinions of Military Personnel on Gays in the Military*, December 2006, submitted to Aaron Belkin, director, Michael D. Palm Center (hereafter Zogby/Palm poll), available at <http://www.zogby.com/news/ReadNews.dbm?ID=1222>.

iii. See Zogby/Palm poll, 14–15, question 13.

iv. Due to security rules that were tightened in the aftermath of 9/11, personal details and even general information about the location of individual personnel is highly restricted. Memorandum from Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz to Secretaries of the Military Departments et al., 18 October 2001, addressing “Operations Security throughout the Department of Defense.”

v. Bonnie Moradi, PhD, and Laura Miller, PhD, “Attitudes of Iraq and Afghanistan War Veterans Toward Gay and Lesbian Service Members,” *Armed Forces & Society Online* First, 29 October, 2009, 6, hereafter referred to as Moradi and Miller report. <http://afs.sagepub.com/cgi/rapidpdf/0095327X09352960v1> The *Boston Globe* and other major media misrepresented this paper commissioned as if it were a genuine research report of

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the RAND Corporation. See Bryan Bender, "Study Builds Case for Repealing Don't Ask," *Boston Globe*, 9 November, 2009.

[http://www.boston.com/news/politics/politicalintelligence/2009/11/study\\_builds\\_ca.html](http://www.boston.com/news/politics/politicalintelligence/2009/11/study_builds_ca.html)

These reports disregarded RAND's news release, which indicated that the paper "was the product of a contract directly with the researchers and not through RAND."

<http://www.rand.org/news/press/2009/11/09/index.html>

In email correspondence with the RAND Media Relations Department, the Center for Military Readiness determined that RAND employee Dr. Miller produced the paper on her own time, together with an academic associate at the University of Florida. Survey results discussed in the paper were from the 2006 Zogby International Poll, which also was commissioned by the Palm Center.

vi. Zogby/Palm poll methodology, 2.

vii. The Moradi and Miller report acknowledged that the Zogby/Palm poll and other studies shared "the limitation of being unable to distinguish responses by sexual orientation, as asking for sexual orientation disclosure on a survey would pose a substantial risk to participants under 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,'" 6.

viii. Zogby/Palm poll, 2. Zogby's 2006 polling sample was somewhat questionable, but if it were to be considered credible, internal data in the poll revealed interesting insights. The poll seemed to indicate that opinions on this issue have more to do with military occupation than they do with age. Active-duty people in the younger and older ranks were more favorable to the idea, but the ones in the middle age and experience group, who were more likely to be involved in close combat situations, were more strongly opposed.

ix. Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) Watch, Alliance Defense Fund, [Marriage Amendment Summary](#), updated Fall 2008.

<http://www.domawatch.org/amendments/amendmentsummary.html>

x. Kyle Dropp and Jon Cohen, ["Acceptance of Gay People in Military Grows Dramatically,"](#) *Washington Post*, 19 July 2008, A03.

xi. While 71 percent of self-identified veterans in the *Washington Post* poll said gay people who do not declare themselves as such should be allowed to serve, that number dropped sharply to 50 percent for those who are open about their sexuality.

xii. *Presidential Commission Report*, 15 November 1992, Commissioner-Generated Finding 14, p. C-135, citing Roper Organization, Inc., "Attitudes Regarding the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces: The Public Perspective," September 1992.

xiii. Brendan McGarry, ["Troops Oppose Repeal of 'Don't Ask,'"](#) *Navy Times*, 5 January 2009, 16. Annual *Military Times* surveys are done by mailing questionnaires randomly to subscribers to the affiliated newspapers *Air Force Times*, *Army Times*, *Navy Times*, and *Marine Corps Times*. The polls tabulate only responses from active-duty personnel. Results are published in all four affiliated newspapers.

xiv. Michelle Tan, "No More Felony Waivers," *Army Times*, 4 May 2009, 28. In 2004, the US Army felt compelled to adjust waiver policies to allow some recruits to join despite previous run-ins with the law. Due to the economic downturn of 2009, however, recruiting results improved and felony waivers were suspended.