



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on June 5, 2025

National Review Bemoans Hegseth's Renaming USNS Harvey Milk

When Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth ordered the Navy to rename the USNS *Harvey Milk* — named for the murdered [San Francisco homosexual politician](#) — the Lavender Lobby's phalanx on Capitol Hill pranced to the latest front in the battle to straighten out the military.

Far-left Democratic Senator Adam Schiff of California offered a resolution to stop the resolution, [which Republicans defeated](#).

But support for Milk came from another quarter, too: the purportedly conservative *National Review*. It wanted to know why the Navy was renaming the ship, given that "Harvey Milk was a patriot."



Maxwell Orlosky/Wikimedia Commons
USNS Harvey Milk

Maybe he was. But he was also some other things that *NR's* senior reporter John Fund didn't mention.

Harvey Milk Was a Patriot And A Gay Conservative For Much Of His Life. Why Is The Pentagon Removing His Name From A Ship? A petty and "low rent" move by Secretary Hegseth. <https://t.co/8jffIN13vN>

— John Fund (@johnfund) [June 4, 2025](#)

The Renaming

[Military.com reported](#) on Tuesday that Hegseth ordered the ship renamed in a memorandum to Navy Secretary John Phelan. As well, the website reported, "the timing of the announcement — occurring during Pride month — was intentional."

Pride month used to be called "June," but anyway, the ship would be renamed to ensure the Navy's "alignment with president and SECDEF objectives and SECNAV priorities of reestablishing the warrior culture."

For years, the military — and in this case the Navy — [has been focused](#) on integrating sex perverts and mentally ill "transgenders" into the services, notably even combat units. In keeping with that obsession with sex perverts, in 2021, Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro renamed the ship.

"Today we christened the USNS Harvey Milk (T-AO 206)! This great ship honors #NavyDiver & #CivilRights activist Harvey Milk who was forced out of the service due to unfair policies," a deleted [X post said](#). "Because of him, today our #LGBTQ #Sailors & #Marines serve honorably as their genuine selves."

Even better, a "transgender" former Navy officer, ["Paula" Neira, christened the ship](#).



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Hegseth Orders Navy to Strip Name of Gay Rights Icon Harvey Milk from Ship
<https://t.co/qPM9uoz6mu>

— Military.com (@Militarydotcom) [June 3, 2025](#)

National Review: He Was a “Patriot”

Now, Hegseth wants to correct that egregious error, much to the chagrin of NR’s Fund.

“A former Pentagon official told me that Hegseth’s decision is ‘low-rent,’” [Fund wrote](#):

It certainly seems like a gratuitous insult. It’s one thing to properly wipe away obnoxious DEI programs that have created a playpen for superficial thinking and morale-sapping behavior at the Pentagon. It’s another to deliberately remove the name of a historically significant figure. Harvey Milk had a real association with the Navy. During the Korean War, Milk volunteered for the Navy, in which both his father and mother had served. He served as a diving officer on a submarine rescue ship. According to his biography, in 1955, at age 25 and after four years of service, he left the service “after being officially questioned about his sexual orientation.”

Milk “was proud to serve his country,” Fund wrote, citing at length the late [Randy Shilts’](#) biography of Milk, [The Mayor of Castro Street](#). (Castro Street is Homosexual HQ in San Francisco.) As well, “one of Milk’s motivations was his staunch anti-communism,” and he “remained a conservative until he was more than 40 years old,” [Fund reported](#).

Indeed, Shilts wrote, Milk was a “hard-boiled conservative” who toiled for Barry Goldwater’s presidential campaign in 1964 with “his lover, Jack.”

Milk turned left because he opposed the Vietnam War, but he always fought for the “little guy,” Fund wrote.

[Concluded Fund’s lament](#):

Stripping the ship of the only name it has ever had would be a retrograde move and needlessly exacerbate divisions in the armed forces. President Trump has taken an ax to counterproductive DEI government programs, but he has always exhibited an urbanite’s tolerance toward gays. After all, in 2020, Richard Grenell became the first openly gay member of a presidential cabinet as Trump’s director of national intelligence. And this year, Scott Bessent became the first openly gay secretary of the treasury in the nation’s history.

Allowing the Pentagon to make a petty and prejudicial move against the naming of a ship after Harvey Milk sullies that record and is no way to build esprit de corps in our military.

The Real Milk

Yet Fund omitted some of Shilts’ more eye-opening revelations about Milk. When President Barack Hussein Obama awarded Milk the Medal of Freedom (posthumously), [Peter Sprigg offered](#) a different take on Shilts’ book on WorldNetDaily.

Milk’s “first sexual experiences were in the standing room section of the Metropolitan Opera [in New



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York], a gathering place for homosexual men,” and he “was leading an active homosexual life by the age of 14,” Shilts reported.

In the Navy, Milk picked up “hitchhiking sailors by offering them a bed to sleep in,” Sprigg wrote of Shilts’ reporting. Only when they got to his apartment did they learn Milk had just one bed.

Though Milk appears to have gotten an “other than honorable” discharge because of sexual crimes, he claimed he had received dishonorable discharge because he “knew the story would make good copy,” Shilts wrote. People would feel sorry for him, and vote accordingly.

But worse than all that were the men he exploited, [Sprigg observed](#):

The information Shilts provides about Milk’s sexual partners is revealing about the nature of male homosexual life in America. Milk’s first long-term lover, Joe, had his “introduction to gay life” when he performed sex acts upon men in a movie theatre for money — at age 9. Milk’s next lover, Craig, had been arrested after having sex with a 40-year-old man — when Craig was 14. He met Milk when he was 17 — “[I]t would be to such boyish-looking men in their late teens and early 20s that Milk would be attracted for the rest of his life,” Shilts reports. Another lover, Jack, moved in with Milk when he was 16 and Milk was 33. Jack attempted suicide several times, and once when he physically attacked Milk, “Harvey literally tied him up and threw him in a closet.”

In other words, whether he was a patriot, and whatever he thought the misfortunes of the “little guy,” Milk was a statutory rapist. But forget about that small detail that Fund disregarded.

Fake Hate Crime?

Continued Sprigg:

Milk may even have faked a “hate crime” to advance his political ambitions. The windows of Milk’s camera shop were “blown out by ... M-80 mega-firecrackers.” Shilts says, “Years later friends hinted broadly that Harvey had more than a little foreknowledge that the explosions would happen. ‘... [T]he campaign was sort of going slow, and, well ...’”

Another Milk stunt was possibly worse. After homosexual former Marine [Oliver Sipple](#) saved President Gerald Ford from the bullets of would-be assassin [Sara Jane Moore](#) by grabbing her arm, Sipple didn’t want publicity. “Patriot” Milk outed him to [Herb Caen](#) of the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Milk was also a booster of Jim Jones, psychopathic founder of the communist Peoples Temple. [Milk wrote](#) to President Jimmy Carter and three congressmen in February 1978 to get help stopping what he believed to be a smear campaign against Jones and his temple, which had moved to Guyana in 1974. On November 18, 1978, Jones and his gang of cutthroats murdered U.S. Representative Leo Ryan and two journalists who went to Guyana to investigate the temple’s activities. After those murders, [Jones induced](#) some 900 followers to drink Flavor Aid laced with cyanide. Those who refused were injected. [Jones shot](#) himself in the head.

The Navy named the [auxiliary ship](#) after Milk for one reason, and it wasn’t because he was a “patriot.” Milk, as Military.com reported, was a “gay icon.”

And a lot more, as Shilts reported. Maybe Hegseth knew that.



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