



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on December 1, 2010

## Pentagon Completes “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” Study

The Pentagon finally completed its year-long study of the military’s “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy yesterday. While some assert that the results of the study confirm that there are minimal risks associated with repealing “don’t ask, don’t tell,” Fox News explains, “a drilldown into the report shows some concerns about a hasty end to the 15-year policy.”



The report was conducted by Jeh Johnson of the Pentagon General Counsel as well as General Carter Ham, top general at European Command, both of whom organized the results of the survey, which was sent to 400,000 active-duty service members and their families. Additionally, the survey queried 296 homosexual service members and 150,000 military spouses, of whom 44,000 responded.

Of the 115,052 military personnel responses, 70 percent asserted that they believed a repeal of “don’t ask, don’t tell” would not have a negative impact on military morale. Likewise, 92 percent contend that their experiences with colleagues perceived to be homosexual have been nothing but positive.

However, the results are not the same across the board. Not all military personnel are in favor of repealing the ban, most notably the [Marine Corps and those engaged in combat](#). In fact, 40 to 60 percent of combat troops assert that gays openly serving in combat would have negative consequences, and 58 percent of those responding negatively were Marines.

Former Marine Corps Commandant General James Conway declared on multiple occasions that he believed having gays serving openly in the military to be detrimental to combat effectiveness. His replacement, General James Amos, has articulated similar sentiments. Both Conway and Amos claim that the Marines maintain a generally negative attitude toward a repeal of the military ban.

As well, the survey questioned military personnel privacy and cohabitation, specifically regarding sharing bathrooms. The report declared that “the creation of a third and possibly fourth category of bathroom facilities and living quarters ... would be a logistical nightmare, expensive, and impossible to administer.” And Representative Duncan Hunter of California, a Marine combat veteran, claims that the Pentagon worded the questions on the survey in such a way as to compel a specific response.

Hunter explained, “If anything, the survey results make a compelling case for keeping current policy in place and avoiding any type of distraction for our nation’s military and its combat mission. When breaking down the specifics, more respondents answered unfavorably or remain uncertain about a policy change than those who favor repeal.”

The general results of the study were welcomed by Defense Secretary Robert Gates, who has long



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announced his desire to see a repeal of the military policy. Gates ordered the review in February after Obama declared his intent to see the military ban repealed. "A strong majority of those who answered the survey, more than two-thirds, do not object to gays and lesbians serving openly in uniform," Gates remarked at a Tuesday press conference.

Acknowledging the inconsistencies of the survey, however, Gates added, "Within the combat armed specialties and units, there is a higher level of discontent, of discomfort and resistance, to changing the current policy. Those findings and the potential implications for America's fighting forces remain a source of concern to the service chiefs and to me."

Forced to come to terms with the "level of discontent," Gates agreed that an immediate repeal may have a negative impact.

"If a court ordered us to do this tomorrow, I believe ... the risk to the force would be high if we had no time to prepare."

On the other hand, he indicated, "If the Congress of the United States repeals this law, this is the will of the American people."

Where the military will go from here remains uncertain. Recently, a California federal judge [ruled](#) "don't ask, don't tell" an unconstitutional policy, but the Supreme Court [overturned](#) the stay while the federal appeals court examines the case, and in expectation of the Pentagon survey results. As the results of the survey appear to be inconclusive, it seems likely that further discussion is in order prior to taking action.

To boot, legislation repealing "don't ask, don't tell" passed in the House of Representatives this year, but failed to pass in the Senate. Considering the massive agenda for the lame-duck session, it seems unlikely that the bill will be addressed before the end of the 111th Congress. If it were, however, Republican Senator Lindsey Graham reveals that there are not enough votes in the Senate for the bill to pass.

Sometime at the end of this week, Secretary Gates and Mike Mullen, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Admiral, are expected to testify in front of the House and Senate Armed Services Committee.

*Photo of U.S. Marines: AP Images*



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