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LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE SERVICE OF GAYS AND LESBIANS IN ALLIED MILITARIES

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PANEL 4: SERVICE MEMBER EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNED:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. SINGER: So, again, my name is Peter Singer. I direct the 21st Century Defense Initiative here at Brookings. And it's my honor to be moderating this panel, not just because it's the last panel, but because I think it takes us down to the crucial part of this question. We've walked from the ministerial level to the command level and what this panel is going to do is look at the individual experience aspect.

And there's -- before I introduce -- there's two things, two housekeeping notes that I want to make. The first of these is actually a technical one. Anytime you hear the microphone buzzing, it's because someone didn't turn off their PDA in this room, so we will know if you haven't turned off your PDA or your cell phone. So, please, go ahead, a reminder to do that. So not only we won't have cell phones ringing, but also we won't have that buzzing.

The second is a note about -- in some ways this often feels to me watching a little bit like a deposition where we're asking a question and then getting a series of yeses or a series of nos. And so the first thing is the idea of can you stack the deck? Can a think tank reach out into multiple different national militaries and find the exact people who represent the view that we would want? And as powerful as Brookings may hope to be, we don't have that kind of intelligence-gathering capability. And I think that's what we're pleased to have a diversity of experiences, and I'll get to this in terms of the panel members on this one, but I do think it's striking that on certain points we are leading to uniformity. But for the purpose of this panel and to take advantage of this, and I ask of you of the audience members as well, is let's not lose the opportunity we have here. Let's not ask it in yes-or-no questions, but actually ask for sort of the story side. And I'm going to try to do the same and urge you in your opening statements to really reflect on your personal experiences of this.

So, I'm actually, to save time, not going to go through each of the individual

backgrounds. You've got their biographies. What I would say this is the sum total of their experience, again, is quite amazing. You have the tens of years of military experience. More importantly, I was going through and we have folks with a background in everything from naval warfare to logistics, to intelligence, again, it covers the wide spectrum of military activities. The types of deployments that the members have been on, again, range from Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq, Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, various UN peacekeeping missions on land and at sea, also in terms of the cross between the military and the law enforcement side on things like drug interdiction. And I think it in a sense is a reflection of the changes in 21st century warfare and the demands that we're putting on our militaries out there, and so we see that diverse experience here.

And so, with that, what I'd like to do is again, let's just walk down from closest to me to the end, please begin with your opening statements reflecting on individual experiences from the service member level.

MR. OHLSON: Thank you very much, and thank you for having me here, especially coming from a small country like Sweden, and it's also a non-NATO member, but we still have a lot of international experience, which I will come back to in just a couple of seconds.

I also remind you that Sweden is now going from a conscript armed service, which we had for -- since -- for hundreds of years until starting this summer with an all-volunteer armed forces, which is a challenge for the politicians, but also, of course, for the armed forces, especially when it comes to attract young people to be -- to have this job.

I also want to remind you that Sweden, we never had a policy like the colleagues from Canada or the Netherlands that people are not allowed to serve, but what we had in Sweden was, until 1979, homosexuality was considered by the health authorities to be an illness. So we could, of course, call in the morning and say that you were sick

because you felt a little bit gay today, but you could also be excluded to doing your military service, which happened.

But from '79 to 2000, nothing really happened. And then in 2000, a study formed in Sweden by a captain and showed that people felt -- were feeling quite bad to homosexuals and lesbians in the armed forces and this -- what happened then was that the then Supreme Commander, Johan Hederstedt, he felt that this was not the case, so he acted on a personal -- he promised a personal commitment to dealing with these issues. But we'll probably come back to that later, but we have a different experience than the colleagues from the other countries.

And from a personal perspective, I can say that I served 1992 in Sarajevo and UNPROFOR, the UN peacekeeping force. Then I was deep in the closet and it was not an issue when you were rounding on Sniper's Alley whether you were gay, lesbian, or heterosexual. You only wanted to survive, and that's what we talked with our colleagues about.

The second time, when I came out, actually, was late -- after the Supreme Commander, we had a press conference and with our network, as you see in my bio, this was the first time I was open to my colleagues thanks to the Supreme Commander.

I was back in the closet when I was studying here in Washington across the river at Bolling Air Force Base for the Defense Intelligent Agency because I could not be -- well, I didn't feel comfortable being open while studying with DIA.

And I was deeply back in the closet in 2005, 2006, when I served as head of district for the Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission in Sri Lanka for two reasons: my colleagues were military officers and police officers from the Nordic countries, and we were serving in a country where we didn't have -- where homosexuality is illegal. So, when I met military commanders from Sri Lankan or from the guerillas, the first question is also, what was my

name, and it was Leif Ohlson, and the you are asked whether I was married or not. But my answer was always that I had a fiancé, but she was killed in a road accident and then everyone was sad. And so, I didn't have that -- and, of course, it felt extremely uncomfortable starting the conversation with a military commander from -- a brigade commander from the Sri Lankan army or the rebel, starting to lie for him when we are supposed to negotiate with them instead.

And that's my personal experience from the field which I will conclude my introductions with.

MR. MULDER: First of all, thank you. Thank you Brookings Institute, thank you to RAND . Yesterday we had a meeting. Thank you also to America. I went to start as a counselor, as a humanistic moral counselor with some words. First of all, I want to apologize that English is not my native language, so please do understand.

Proud and out doesn't mean that you are a drag queen. I'm also openly gay as a counselor, but proud means self-respect, proud means dignity, and proud means also in a freedom and in a freedom on an identity level. I think what my colleague told us that we may not forget that the process of coming out, it's a hard way. It has to do with your background, your parents, your values, your norms, schools, friends, but also your environment on a work level, and the most of the people I speak with also abroad, they say, Wilco, counselor, it's easier to be straight than to be gay, to be openly gay. And that means that the struggle of coming out and being proud, it's a hard way because it's, what we heard before, it's up and down.

In the Dutch Armed Forces we have 150 counselors for all kind of backgrounds: Catholic, Protestants, Jewish, Islam, Hindu, and humanistics. We go with them abroad. We also have 60 social workers in the Dutch Armed Forces and we have also around 60 psychotherapists. And it's not only that we talk about problems, we really support

the LGTB community on identity level. I think that's very important that people feel -- that they feel the support from the Royal Dutch Army, I think that's very, very important.

Twice a year we have a kind of conference like this that the whole LGTB community is allowed to talk for three days freely out in privacy, open about all kind of issues.

That's it. Thank you.

MR. JONES: I had quite a long time in my naval service career to think about the day that the gay ban in the UK would be lifted and I had also gone through a few of the challenging hoops of coming out to family and friends and preparing myself mentally and thinking about what would actually happen. And for those in the room who have worn the uniform at some time in their lives, maybe you'll understand when I say that I felt I had a sense of duty to come out on the day that ban was lifted because it was a hard-fought victory for the gay lobby in the UK and one that really needed a face.

Unfortunately, in the UK there are a lot of generals, admirals, and air marshals who got bloody noses from me in the years that followed. For recalcitrants it was a great shame. And if there is one lesson learned from the UK cases, do it once, do it properly, do it completely, and do it within the values of military service, and that will make life a great deal easier.

The other thing that I'd say from personal experience is that people change. I was serving in HMS Fearless in 2000 when the ban was lifted. And a couple of years after leaving that ship, I met up with the wife of a colleague. I had noticed through January that the supply officer of that ship hadn't actually spoken to me for a while. And he went out for Valentine's night dinner with his wife and he said, there's a gay bloke on board, but it's not an issue because I haven't spoken to him for six weeks. And she left the table. He got the bill, he got his own taxi home, and she told him that if hadn't spoken to me by the time he

came home the following day, don't bother coming home. (Laughter)

And he appeared in my cabin the following morning and we had a really odd conversation. And he said, hi Craig, how are you doing? And I said, fine, Ken. And he said, that's good. See you later. (Laughter)

And that commander and his wife are great friends, and I watched him on a journey over about nine months finally finding the moment after a couple of gin and tonics to talk about the realities of being gay in the military. And however difficult and deep this pit may seem at the moment in the U.S., I have every confidence that your servicemen and women have the integrity and the qualities to make that journey.

MR. HAMSTRA: Thank you. I am the chairman of the Foundation of Homosexuality in the Armed Forces. That means that I am trying to be there for all the people who are serving within the armed forces in the Netherlands. But it's not only what I am, of course. I am Peter Kees Hamstra. I am a professional. I am working within the army, that's my job. And the other thing is, in fact, irrelevant.

But back to the foundation. The foundation is completely funded by the Ministry of Defense. It's founded in 1987, and so we were the first openly gay in the whole world and that means a lot.

One thing is that homo rights or gay rights, however you call it, are human rights. That's very important. You can't deny that you are a homosexual. You are a homosexual. You can't choose it. It's a fact of life. You have to be aware of that.

Why is it important to be gay -- to be openly gay? You are a role model. It's important. There are generals who are role models in our country. There are, of course, a lot of other people who are openly gay. But the thing is, not everything is okay within our country. We have also people who dislike gays, people do not know how to cope with gay people. But one thing is for sure, my colleague here next to me said, people can change,

and one of the things you need to do so is that you have to learn about what is homosexuality. What is really going on? You need to educate people, you need to train people on how to cope with all different situations. That's quite important.

And I think that here in the United States, of course, it's a different country, it's a very big country, but -- and it's a great variety of people living here. And I'm convinced that also here, people can change, people can learn. And, of course, homosexuality is always quite a difficult subject to discuss, but, in the end, people learn to know each other and to value each other. And I think that's one of the main things that is really important.

Thank you.

CDR CASSIVI: Good afternoon again. I guess we should change the quotation to: nothing in life is certain except change, death, and taxes. And we still have a hard time dealing with the three of them from time to time.

The closet is a dark place that needs not be dark. It leads to a lot of issues for the individual and particularly it leads people to lead double lives which for -- if any of you have tried to maintain a mistress on the side, you know it's absolutely impossible. You get caught eventually, so bring that to a frame of reference that some may understand.

Being able to be yourself, one, makes you healthy. Mental health is a huge issue and this becomes a mental health issue when you have a segregationist or discrimination type of policy that you actually tell someone that provides valued service that although your service is appreciated, who you are is not. That's not very healthy.

So, those are all good things or elements that really makes me glad that -- to be Canadian and to have lived through the change, because it wasn't so brilliant before the change, a lot of pressure on everyone.

I guess people do change. They change because they're exposed to things they hadn't been before. Most differences are based on not knowing each other.

You know, when I came out in the mid-'90s after I returned from my service in Australia, there were different reactions. Close friends of mine said, well, finally. Okay? They had all figured it out and it was easy for them to figure it out because they knew me.

For others, well, I've known you for 15 years. I didn't know you were gay, but I've never had that experience, so there was curiosity and once we got to know each other then we had a new found respect.

I still find to this day I go to units, you know, I took command of Ville de Quebec last year, you know, it's my fourth command. There are still people who haven't yet served with openly gay members and for them it's still an element of curiosity because they just don't know.

So, dialogue and getting to know each other is a key and I think for me that's what's most important on my personal experience, but to be successful and fighting through that, and I think it's like any element of change, and we're all guilty of it whatever our background, we can't take ourselves too seriously. You've got to be able to laugh about yourself a little bit, and that surely has been my best way to disarm people and enter in an honest dialogue because once you can actually -- to use a British and Australian expression, pull a piss, about yourself, people then are a little bit more open to actually engage in that dialogue and put those prejudices aside.

So, don't fall into the hard, bad theory of stereotypes. We're not all camp.

MR. SINGER: Thank you. What I'd like to do is I'll pose a question and please don't all feel required to answer it, rather any one volunteer or all volunteer, but what I'd like to begin with is this definition of coming out. It's a phrase that's been used a lot and yet I think it means different things to different people and so the question that I would pose is -- and you can either speak to your own experience or what you think is the sort of majority of how this definition, this process of coming out, how it plays out in your service.

What does it mean there? And/or how might we expect it to be for the vast majority if people do come out?

CDR CASSIVI: I guess coming out is, it's a very personal process to start with so to try to define it, I guess, I haven't spent that energy to define it in my mind, but I think it's creating the -- the person being able to create the environment in which they're comfortable being who they are. So, whatever level of disclosure they feel they need to do to be able to function in a healthy way would probably be the kind of definition I would give it at this point.

MR. JONES: I think also it can differ depending upon where you are in the journey of these types of policies. In the UK these days, people come out gradually and each time -- of course, each time you change units, invariably you have to come out again because of course we change our roles every two to three years, generically in the armed forces, so coming out is something that keeps going.

But in the case of the repeal of DADT, then there will be some differences. There will be lots of different approaches. Some people, a very small minority, I think, may come out on day one, hopefully in a blaze of glory and not otherwise, but others will take their time and feel for how things go. The overwhelming majority I think will do that.

MR. SINGER: (inaudible)

MR. JONES: Well, I went around the cabins, basically, and if naval communications could carry a message like that quite so quickly we would have no problems in warfare. I told five people, including the chief steward, who was the ship's gossip, and it took about 30 minutes. (Laughter) There were 500 people on that ship.

SPEAKER: There may be a new market for (inaudible) on that one.

MR. HAMSTRA: Yeah. As my neighbor said before, we have to come out of the closet every time again and again and again. And I also came out of the closet when I

was in Bosnia, an international surrounding, but I did it. Let's say, all the people from, let's say, Western countries, I told them that I was gay after a few weeks, of course, and it happens to be that it was a Finnish guy who was also gay, but he didn't say it up front, after that, of course, he did. And to the people of, let's say, Bangladesh or Kenya or whatever, I told them that I had a friend, and, of course, it's quite easy if you don't say if it's a she or a he. So, that was the end of the discussion.

So, we have to come out again and again. That's one of the hardest things to do because it says something about your person and also you need a really safe environment because if it's not safe, then you'll stay in the closet and that's also what Leif said earlier, I think.

MR. MULDER: I was out when I was around, I think, 18, 19 years old. I was lucky that my parents were very supporting. My brother, my whole family, was really supporting and also my work and study environment was very supporting.

And the other side, to accept myself, this is me, and this is how I feel, took some years more because, you know, it's not on the IQ level, it's on the EQ level, an identity level, that you need to accept yourself, who you are, and that's a process. And in that way support is very, very important because, you know -- I know by myself that you are different, but on the other side, you are not different at all.

MR. OHLSON: Short comment. What might be easier here in the United States since you have this policy "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," is that it might be easier for people to come out. Because what happened in Sweden when the environment changed and people felt more secure and they decided to come out among their colleagues, they got comments from some colleagues saying, why have you been lying all these years? And that did not, of course -- other gays and lesbians to come out the next morning. But what you have to create here is an environment so that someone can come out if they want to and not

force them and drag them out of the closet. But since here it's a little bit easier because you can't blame me for not coming out if I was an American service member because you have the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," so, hopefully, it will be easier here.

And I also think that like Craig had added, it will not happen overnight and it will take some time, of course, to create the environment. That's what it's all about.

MR. SINGER: I want to turn to the question of training and each of your services went through an implementation process. The question that I would pose is obviously training the systems, the instructions that came down, couldn't have been 100 percent perfect. So, based on what we now know, what was a mistake or what was implemented poorly? What, in your experience, do you go, if we knew then what we know now, we would do differently, even if it's something small or large? What can we learn from this process?

CDR CASSIVI: Well, in the Canadian perspective, there was a comment earlier in the panel about role models and I talked about knowing people, and I think some of the training because we hadn't come to face with a lot of people that had come out or things of that nature, that people couldn't associate with other people in the institution and bring that together as to what the training meant, but one thing that was really smart in the sharp training, I remember taking it when I came back from Australia, one of the video footage to show discrimination was about this scenario of, oh, there's a new family that's moving into the neighborhood, and, oh, you know, they're so different than us, and all. It turned the tables around because the family ended up being a military family. And in Canada at the time, you know, we were respected, but maybe not as much, and we realized that, eh, everybody can be discriminated against. I think that was a great tool to bring people around to understand what it is to be the victim of discrimination or the potential victim of discrimination and bring everybody on the same playing field to actually absorb the material,

so that was actually quite clever.

MR. JONES: A couple of points. I mean, I think we've talked quite a lot about the fact that military commanders need to own these policies and whether they completely believe in them or not, need to do the right thing and obey orders because that's what we do as military people.

I think that diversity needs to be embedded in every stage of leadership training, not as a remote and abstract issue, don't send people on diversity training courses if you can avoid it. At every stage of a military person's career, you do more leadership training in preparation for the next rank and the extra responsibilities. I think diversity training needs to be embedded within that.

And the other thing I'd say is something that is very helpful to success is to recognize that gay men and women in the years after the repeal of such a policy will face considerable personal challenges in finding their place in military societies. And I think mutual support could be extremely important in making sure that you don't fill your military psychiatric hospitals and, therefore, I think that community needs to be gathered. And that was a major shortfall in the UK in that the Ministry of Defense and the armed forces did not try to gather their gay community to achieve mutual support and befriending.

Thankfully, that community gathered itself and, in consequence, by 2004, 2005, we'd got to a stage whereby we didn't have those awful cases of people coming out into environments which were really just bewildered by having gay men and women serving alongside. Not negative, but bewildered and poorly informed.

MR. MULDER: I strongly believe in lessons learned are that -- and especially in the Netherlands, we are quite open. And especially my profession, but all the chaplains, I strongly believe in communication. The dialogue is very, very important to understand each other, to respect each other, and to inspire each other. Because a lot of

people, they are unknown on this level, unknown on the level of identity, so we need to inspire each other.

And I think I also believe in when we meet each other, we are helping each other to bring each other on a higher level of awareness, and I think that's management diversity that we all need each other very strongly.

MR. OHLSON: From Swedish perspective, we made a lot of mistakes since we didn't have a policy that changed, but we had research saying that people are not feeling good being in the closet or being afraid of harassments. But we did an extensive training program and if we were to do it again, I would strongly recommend that we do it embedded in the leadership training because we stirred up a lot of dust and people were feeling extremely uncomfortable. In an audience like this, for example -- I've been traveling around to all the units in Sweden and doing training. It was mentally quite disturbing for me as well, I would say, but because being challenged all the time. But what happened was that you had gays and lesbians in the audience which suddenly heard a comrade, colleague, or even commanding officer saying that he hated gays and gays should not be in the military if they had problems. Then we left and went back to Stockholm where everything was nice and calm and they were still out there on the countryside in this more regimental town, and some of them felt extremely bad.

So, I don't believe in these crash courses for the whole military service as we did in Sweden. Next time, if we have to do it again, we'll have to do it in the leadership training as Craig said. It's extremely important as everyone has said on the panel, the leadership is the most important with these issues.

MR. HAMSTRA: Also, the experience is that the LGTB community is so used to reject -- to be rejected on a social level, all kind of levels, but on the other side, the LGTB community, it's also -- they reject their selves. You know, when you are used to be

rejected, you can also reject yourself in life and that's a big issue.

MR. SINGER: I want to build on that question because a number of you have worked on everything from working groups to foundations that both operate within the military but also reach out to the LGBT community beyond. What would be, again, a lessons learned to the community outside the military? How are things handled right? How are things handled wrong? What can the U.S. learn from this potentially?

MR. HAMSTRA: I think that the communities -- the gay communities have to work together because, as Wilco mentioned before, disclosure is a very bad thing and together you are strong and of course you can learn a lot of each other. In the Netherlands, there's a very large group of international companies who had gay networks called Company Pride Platform and it's a huge foundation at this moment including Shell, IBM, all kind of big companies, also American companies like Cisco and et cetera, et cetera. They try to work together because that's one thing you can learn a lot of each other.

So, education, that's also a kind of education. Learning from each other, that is, I think, one of the most powerful things to do and lets people know that you are there and that's -- you have to reach out, you have to see -- let yourself see, let yourself be seen. Whatever.

MR. JONES: I think employee network groups can be hugely beneficial. And I mentioned a couple of minutes ago about the opportunities that befriending creates. The UK Armed Forces Network Community is called Proud to Serve. It has just over 1,000 members. It's an unusual model. It's hosted outside of the military intranets, so it's on the World Wide Web. It's moderated by serving officers and it has lots and lots of discussion forums and is a membership organization and membership is quite closely vetted by the moderating team who are all serving officers or NCOs.

There was some concern about Proud to Serve in the early years at the

administrative end, what would happen if it was run inappropriately? What would happen if posts went up that were silly or if it became divisive? It's run by serving officers. We have military discipline acts and we'd court marshal them if it was inappropriate. It's as simple as that. And it has been fantastically moderated over the years and fantastically well run, and if you are a gay serviceman or woman and you are going to Afghanistan, Iraq, Cyprus, or the Falkland Islands, or anywhere in the world, there is the opportunity to connect with people who you can step out of your unit with and have what I would call an ordinary gay conversation. And if you are doing a nine-month tour in Afghanistan, that's a great thing to be able to do in terms of just having a release from what is quite a challenging environment, especially if you don't really feel able to communicate completely openly with the colleagues that are around you.

So, I think network groups can be hugely beneficial.

CDR CASSIVI: Yeah, they can be, absolutely. I think we haven't gone as far in Canada. There's Public Service Pride, which is basically both civilian and military, mainly centered in Ottawa that create this kind of communication platform for people to gain from the experience of everybody else. Not so much else (inaudible) more subculture gatherings happen from local clubs and the like, but those assembly permits, the exchange of ideas and build the courage of some people to use some of the mechanisms like conflict resolution in harassment when they may not be so inclined to do it, but by sharing their experiences, they can do what they need to do to take care of minor problems. So, very powerful and I think they need to be used more.

MR. SINGER: One last question and I'm asking this not to get you to comment on General Sheehan's famous episode, but rather I'm building off of our American Quadrennial Defense Review, which at the centerpiece of it, it discussed the need for America to be able to work better with partners at a grand strategy and down to the tactical

level, that this was a priority for us. And you mentioned, but a number of other folks in previous panels have mentioned, that you did not feel comfortable, for example, in certain situations with the U.S. military. I wonder if you could specify what exactly the discomfort is. How does that play out? In a sense give us what are we doing here that's setting this up?

MR. OHLSON: I can say another example that we have, for example, is we have colleagues who had been -- was planned for formations in Kosovo and then they were supposed to be stationed -- because there was a helicopter unit at the Camp Bondsteel in Kosovo and they withdrew their application because they didn't want to be based on an American base because they were openly lesbian. So, that, of course, had an effect on the unit because they actually needed that person. But for us, it is when we go abroad it's voluntarily; you can't force anyone.

MR. SINGER: Can I follow up? Was it an issue of the sense that they were worried they would be harassed or was it this is a policy that I don't agree with and I don't want to be in an environment that upholds that policy? Which are two related, but actually very different things.

MR. OHLSON: It's not the fact, actually, that you think that you would be harassed because if you are based on an American -- Swedish officer based on an American base, you always stick to Swedish rules and regulations so you can always go to your commanding officer. It's also that when you sit in the mess or talk to people, you can't be open -- or it's -- you feel -- you are afraid that it will be difficult to be open. People think a lot about what will happen and what I felt when I was across the river here is that, well, I couldn't talk about it because all my American colleagues would act in a different way. That's what I'm thought. I'm not quite sure what would happen, of course, because I didn't test them. But instead I was back in the closet.

CDR CASSIVI: Yeah, and as I expressed earlier, we had some of those

perception issues with someone say who's been selected for exchange posting, for example, but my experience with American also in exchange in Canada actually has been extremely positive, actually. We're, again, quite curious and really open to discussion, so that way I have no concerns about going to Rhode Island this summer. It should be good.

MR. JONES: I kind of agree, actually. I've served with U.S. Armed Forces for most of my career. But I do think that the DADT policy alienates the U.S. Armed Forces a little bit when working in coalition and joint situations with, for example, NATO Armed Forces because it does make the U.S. a little bit of an oddity, and that's a great shame.

And I think it creates a certain first day at school nervousness. I certainly notice that. I went to Naples for a visit in 2004, a couple of days after I had done something with the International Herald Tribune, and I met a U.S. Navy captain who looked decidedly nervous, and I'm not used to U.S. Navy captains being nervous. They're normally pretty damn robust. So, I thought that was really rather curious. And I worked with that team for about two years and had a great time, but I think it would be great to sweep that first-day-at-school nervousness away.

MR. HAMSTRA: I've not worked with an American -- met with Americans so far, but the thing is, I think that for the Americans themselves, it's far more a threat to work with me because I'm openly gay and I -- if I sense that somebody is gay, then perhaps he thinks, oh, gosh, I have to go away from this guy because he can reveal me. And I don't think that's a good idea.

So, I think we work internationally. We try to form a group within NATO to discuss the issue of homosexuality. It started last year and this year we're going on with that because I think it's relevant and we are working together as NATO partners and I think that's a good thing and we have to maintain that.

MR. MULDER: My experience in Bosnia was quite positive, I told you

yesterday, because they were quite curious about my own identity and also, of course, because I am a counselor. So I didn't feel any negativity around me but the other side is, I always choose an environment where I feel safe. You know, we already heard the word trust, and I always choose, okay, is this a safe environment to open myself and then I will open myself, and was actually in Bosnia, in Sarajevo, no problem at all with Americans.

MR. SINGER: Why don't we open up the discussion? So, please if you have a question raise your hand and again wait for the mike.

MR. McMICHAEL: Hi, Bill McMichael, Military Times Newspapers.

I'm curious if you all could give us any examples, and this might apply less to the folks from the Netherlands, but there may be examples of points where the policy was being implemented and there was opposition or there were situations where people were having difficulty -- a difficult time?

Dr. Okros this morning gave us the example of the squadron commander, whoever it was, who dismissed the petty officer or sent him back to shore for his lack of leadership skills, as he perceived it. I wondered if any of you all had seen or had experienced anything like that in your careers.

CDR CASSIVI: I can tell you a personal story where when I took the appointment of second in command of my first submarine and I was a little -- not concerned but had some issues that I needed to monitor and particularly how the crew may be treated by others, you know, oh, you're on the pink crew type of thing, which did happen as jokes at the bar after that. But at the end, after a few of those events, consensus was, well, you'd be lucky to have the pink XO look after you because he knows his job. I mean, that's kind of as bad as I can relate it.

You know, the world is not perfect. There's always minor attitude issues that will come from time-to-time, and certainly in the early implementation times there were.

You know, people pass comments. You can't change a culture day-to-day. People are used to telling their jokes. People are used to passing their offhand comments. But it's by letting them know that you're there and then going through that discussion process without taking yourself too seriously, disarming the situation, and bringing it back to a common base of understanding.

And surely, in my experience there have been minor issues of that sort. I haven't had any sailor refuse to serve under my leadership or anything of that nature. It's always been a place of respect and I haven't heard of incidents of that nature across -- surely the units have been exposed to.

MR. OHLSON: Just a brief comment to say what has happened in some cases in Sweden is that people are not -- because we have the Supreme Commander who has been very, very offensive, I would say, when we started this, and what has happened is that I've heard from younger officers that they are now so afraid to speak what they really think about other issues because that we are a little bit too strong on the gay issue. And I think that that might be a kind of backlash, I would say, because it's -- then we have created an environment that people can't speak about other important issues as well, where you need to have an open discussion. That is what has happened because we have a very, very strong commitment from the Supreme Commander, but as I would also state that the commitment from the Supreme Commander has been extremely important and it's created a better working environment and it's also created a better recruitment base. And we can see figures of that now, especially when it comes to women, actually. We think that it's -- one of the reasons is because we have a better environment for all minorities now.

MR. SINGER: Any other questions?

MR. BAGSLEY: Larry Bagsley , former Navy officer, again. My question is based upon the current state of repeal in the United States and where we are and what's

been done as a set up from some of the services.

As you know, we had General Pace, who declared homosexuality was immoral; General Sheehan, who's claimed that failures in military performance were due to homosexuality; and then most recently General Conway, who's decided that he would not -- publicly decided he would not put straight people with gay people. That's a set up for what's going to happen when the repeal hits, should it hit. What do I tell my gay marine friends as far as preparing them for the coming out process, in the Marine Corps in particular, in today's world?

MR. JONES: The great thing about sea officers is that generally they don't last very long and dinosaurs die off. And I remember in the couple of years leading up to the lifting of the gay ban in the UK, we had a First Sea Lord who made it quietly known that he felt that he'd resign if the gay ban was lifted, but, frankly, he'd come to the end of his career and he was replaced by a much better officer. So, I think that there will be great challenges.

At the moment DADT is at a stage whereby there are some folks who may believe that by creating a ruckus around the issue, then they may be able to put it off for a while. But I think, as you know from your own experience, military people are quite good at towing the line when they're told to do so in the right way.

MR. HAMSTRA: I think that's quite important, that in the Netherlands, for instance, it's forbidden to discriminate. I think that it's one of the main reasons that it makes it easier for people to act accordingly. And furthermore, there's also a social issue. First you have to have the legislation rights, then after that, then you have the social things going on and the cultural changes and that kind of stuff, and that will take a long time. Even in the Netherlands, it's not finished for a long time, I can assure you that. So, it's a long process, that's for sure. But in the end it makes you stronger because you can be yourself, you can be a professional, and that's what it is. It has nothing to do with homosexuality in the first

place.

CDR CASSIVI: I think practically your friends will know when it's the right time. It will be for them to find out and it will be based on this relationship of trust that they'll have accomplished at their unit and they'll see the attitude to the management of the change and the leadership that will be provided to make the change happen and to honest discussion with their support group that permit them to survive from day-to-day. As long as they haven't created a web of lies that's just going to discredit them and make it difficult, I think that people will come to their own terms and so I wish them the best.

MR. MULDER: Well, as our colleague (inaudible) had told us already before, is you need to handle natural and make contact with them, support them, and don't make a big issue from it.

MR. SINGER: Any other questions? Okay, I think we're getting to the witching hour here. Actually, Aaron, if you could join me up on stage here.

What I'd like to do is first make a comment, which is this panel, but also the prior panels, the sum total of this conference, has for me personally created an incredibly rich, treasure trove of not only perspectives, but just simply knowledge and information. And in many ways, I wish we could take this on the road. And, in fact, I posed that question earlier with a little bit of an agenda, which is my sense that if a transition does happen, it would be incredibly fruitful for those who are serving in the U.S. military to be able to get the kind of question-and-answer experience that we've had with you. You know, the ability of be it a submarine officer who's about to go through this transition to ask someone who's gone through this, et cetera, because we've seen the benefit of having this kind of discussion here. I wish our Congress could have a similar kind of discussion.

The second thing is to thank all of you who've helped make this discussion possible, and that extends from the people who have put in the hard work on the planning

side, particularly Chip and Heather, and the staff at Brookings, our partners at Palm.

But then finally, I want to thank all our speakers and participants who've not only -- I want to thank them for coming, in many cases, long distances or even short distances with our friends from the Australian Embassy next door, but not only for joining us here, but, more importantly, the real introspection, but also openness of discussion that you've helped us to participate in. We very much value that.

So, please join me in a round of applause for these panelists. (Applause)

And with that, I want to turn it over to Aaron for the final words.

MR. BELKIN: Thank you so much, Peter. It's been an honor to work with Brookings, the incredible staff here, the Palm staff. Thank you, General Semianiw, for the delegation that you brought to this conference. It was a huge honor.

The question of balance and representativeness was raised in a discussion about an hour ago. I mentioned earlier that the Palm Center has done nine studies on gays and lesbians in foreign militaries. We interviewed over 100 experts, in Israel, Canada, Britain, Australia, South Africa. We interviewed every single expert we could find who had expressed a public opinion about gays and lesbians in the military: traditional values groups, politicians, ministry officials, journalists, scholars. We interviewed everybody who had predicted that the sky would fall prior to the repeal of gay bans. And we were not able to find a single expert anywhere in the world who had concluded, after the lifting of a gay ban, that any military anywhere had suffered any detriment to cohesion. So, that is the reason why you did not see more diversity in terms of conclusions about the affects of repeal.

I'd like to conclude with a brief story. The Palm Center staff and I have been traveling every year for the last seven years to the Army War College and the Air Force Academy and also to West Point, the military academy, so three times a year for seven

years, to give what I believe were the first lectures in all those venues on “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” And the very first of those lectures at the Army War College seven years ago, the college was embarrassed that they had invited us to talk about gays in the military and so they titled the panel “Social Problems in the Armed Forces.” And so they had several speakers on gays in the military, but then they also had one person who spoke on disability in the armed forces just to prove that this was not a gay panel.

The arc from that day to Chairman Mullen’s remarks several months ago lead me to believe that the culture has changed, and I really appreciate all the contributions of the experts here to enhance the public policy conversation. Thank you so much.

(Applause)

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I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

/s/Carleton J. Anderson, III

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