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

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PANEL 3: COMMAND EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNED:

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COLONEL KEES MATTHIJSSEN
Royal Netherlands Army

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P R O C E E D I N G S

LTC. McLEAN: Okay, good afternoon, everybody, and welcome back from lunch, and welcome to those of you who may just be joining us.

We're going to continue our discussions here, but, now, we're going to move to a totally different level. What I'd like to say at this point is that what we've discussed here this morning previously was we've talked at the policy level, we've talked at the Department of Defense or the Ministry of Defense level, as it were. And then, after that, we talked at the scholarly level, at the studies from the academics who have been studying and researching in this area for quite some time. But what we thought was important to do today and specifically now was to go and talk where you take the policy and theory and the studies and you actually have to apply those things to lead men and women into combat. And, so, we decided to have a commander's panel here.

As many of you may know, command is extremely difficult to task, but I wouldn't really call it so much a "task" as those of us, I think, in command, at times, look at it as a privilege and an honor to go ahead and do that. but it can be a daunting duty. You have to balance a lot of things: You have to balance the mission and you have to balance morale and the welfare of your people and their families. And, so, that task can, at times, be difficult when you have to translate the policies that come from on high and make them work down among the men and the women.

So, what we want to bring out here today is we've talked at that level, we want to now talk about the nuts and bolts, how it's worked.

I would argue sometimes that a lot of what the Ministry says, it's been no impact, no issue, et cetera. I don't discount that, but what I would say is that a lot of those issues, if they're there, get headed off at the company, at the battalion level, and at the regimental level, and they never reach their way up into the MOD. They may not get reported. Unless there is something particularly heinous or horrible, you're probably not going to hear about them because men and women, commanders, staff NCOs, NCOs, take care of the situation as is appropriate, and those are the guys who really have to balance personal issues with accomplishing the mission.

So, today, we have the privilege of hosting four distinguished senior unit leaders who have vast experience doing the things about which I just talked. Combined, these officers here

before you have over 100 years of experience of leading men and women in the defense of their nations to include the recent conflicts. What is more important, I think, actually, is the majority of that time, that 100 years of service, their countries have had inclusive policies. So, I don't think that they come from any position where they can't say that they're had experience in dealing with these issues. Whether or not it has come up is an issue. It may also be a point that they'll bring out, but, also, the fact is that they may have had experience.

So, with that 100 years of service, we'd like to go ahead and do some introductions, if I may. They're in your handouts there, but real briefly, I want to go ahead and bring out a couple of highlights from each of these men's careers.

Our first panelist is Commander Luc Cassivi, has tremendous experience. Again, when I looked in how this panel was filling out, I was in awe because these men have incredible track records, and that's coming obviously from a Marine officer. I'm looking at these and going wow, you guys really have some tremendous experience.

Luc Cassivi has commanded men at both three submarines as well as a submarine division and a sea training group, and he's presently the commanding officer of 225 men of the Halifax Class Frigate, the HMCS Ville De Quebec.

Next, Lieutenant Colonel Nick Grimshaw is a decorated infantry man from the prestigious Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry Regiment. He has both combat command experience in Afghanistan, as well as extensive training in the art and science of military leadership, and is currently the J5 at the Canadian Special Operations Force Command.

Next to him is Lieutenant Colonel Mick King, who joins us today from the Australian Embassy after a long arduous walk down the street -- (Laughter) -- where he is responsible for joint personnel and logistics. He is an experienced logistics officer with 28 years of service who has commanded soldiers deployed to both East Timor and the Middle East.

And we are pleased to have Colonel Kees Matthijssen here today. Colonel Matthijssen has extensive operational command experience leading Dutch infantry men during peacekeeping and Bosnia Herzegovina and combat in both Iraq and Afghanistan. He is currently attending the U.S. Army War College as challenging strategic level residence course, due to

graduate here in a few short weeks.

Just to reiterate our rules, please keep your remarks and the follow-on responses succinct, preferably no more than two minutes so we can cover as much ground as possible, and then I will open it up to the audience once we've concluded some moderator questions.

Indifference to his rank and experience, I'd like to start with Colonel Matthijssen.

COL. MATTHIJSSEN: Thank you very much for this great introduction. I think you set the standard pretty high after lunch.

Before I start my introductory remarks, I would like to ask you a question, and you don't have to answer it, but just think of it: What did you do in 1974? 1974 was the year that the ban was lifted in the Netherlands, and Aaron mentioned it in his introduction. I think we were the first one on that. But I will not stick too much in history; I will look towards my command experience and what I think is important in a command job to make it all happen.

Before I do that, I want to mention a few things out of the last survey that has been done in the Dutch Armed Forces, and that was in 2006, and, if I'm right, in 2010, so, this year, we will have a new survey. The results of the 2006 survey were that the majority of defense personnel, being 90 percent, believes that gays and lesbians should be free to live their own life. And, within that survey, also, gays and lesbians were interviewed in the Dutch Armed Forces, and they reported that the working environment in the Armed Forces in the Netherlands is benign for homosexuals. Although open discrimination is rare, there are experiences that are not exclusively positive, but these are kind of the minor things, so to say, more at the individual level. So, average, the outcome is very positive.

And the last remark on that, 25 percent of the homosexuals in armed forces are not open at work about their homosexuality, but 75 percent are, which is quite a high number, I would say.

Now, what do I think as a commander is important. I think what really counts down at the grassroots level is that the working climate and the atmosphere within a unit is the most important. What I always say is that you have to give your soldiers two things: That is a challenging mission and that is a good atmosphere and a good climate within the unit to be able for them to fulfill

that mission. And it is the profession that counts. It's the behavior and the profession of the soldiers that counts and not his sexual preference or whatever diversity.

Within that, it's also important to act normal, I always say. Be who you are and accept others the way they are. And within that climate, so, have the room to discuss any issue that there might be and hold your soldiers accountable on their behavior and on their profession and not any other things because, in the end, every man or woman that joins the Army is motivated to do a job, is motivated to serve his or her nation and to pay, in the end, if deployed, the highest possible price on that.

I think that's the bottom line. I think within that atmosphere, that climate, I think there is a good and a safe working environment for homosexuals, as well. I'll leave it at that.

LTC. McLEAN: Thank you.

LTC. KING: Well, thank you very much for allowing me to be here to speak with you today about my command experiences. As General Willis said, this is a strange very much of a principle of our believing in a (inaudible). And, for us, it's about a respect and a strong focus on your ability to do your job. It's not about your sexual orientation, your color, or your creed. It's about you doing a job and literally pulling your weight as part of a team.

The policy was implemented in Australia when I was a junior officer. (inaudible) some gnashing of teeth by some individuals, for the most part, the policy came and it went. And everyone just got on, and there's no discernable change that anybody could see, and I was at the junior level as I looked in at that stage.

Certainly, for commanding at a battalion level and below, it's about unit cohesiveness and delivering operational effectiveness. And I'll speak about some (inaudible) later on, but, from my experience, sexual orientation just doesn't matter. All groups need to pull together to be able to deliver a result and to deliver on the mission, and that's simply what it is, but it's about all groups, not a group, it's about all groups. And no group being treated any different from any other. It's quite a fundamental part of all of that.

In terms of small groups, as been alluded to earlier this morning, most people in a small group know who is who. They know who's good, who's bad, who does particular things that

they shouldn't and things that they should. So, it's no surprise to people out there, generally, who's orientated a particular way or not. But what people do concern themselves with is whether they pull together as part of a team, and that can isolate people.

The (inaudible) is leadership. You have to believe in it, you have to establish an organizational climate which has trust. People have to trust commanders, but the point for that is commanders need to be given the resources, the policy, and the authority to be able to make decisions in a flexible way, as well.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Good afternoon. Thank you very much. I don't want to sound like a broken record, but I'm afraid that a lot of the comments will be echoed from my point of view. But in truly military fashion, I'll start with a bottom line upfront. That it is truly not an issue for us, and it was not for me and my soldiers in Afghanistan in our recent operations.

As a subunit commander, I was not interested in whether or not any of my soldiers were gay, lesbian, or bisexual. What mattered to me was how well they did their job, not what sexual orientation they were. An individual is judged by their competence and their primary job. Like all soldiers, we're judged by our loyalty, integrity, honesty, and professionalism. For me, a soldier who demonstrated a lack of any of these essential soldier qualities was a source of greater concern to scrutiny than anyone who was openly gay or lesbian.

In 2006, I was an infantry company commander in Afghanistan, and we conducted counterinsurgency operations in various districts in Kandahar involving numerous actions with the enemy. And one of my soldiers was a lesbian. It was no secret to the unit. In fact, she was in a common law relationship, that administrative paperwork had been signed off by the chain of command to recognize that, and she was employed as a squad second in command and a light-armored vehicle crew commander. She was extremely competent, very well-respected by her peers, subordinates, and superiors, and I'm happy to report that since that time, she's been promoted to the rank of sergeant and actually returned to Afghanistan in 2008 for another tour, and she was, in fact, a pallbearer for a Ramp Ceremony of another fellow soldier who served with us at that time. She's currently employed as an instructor at our infantry school where she's teaching junior officers and

non-commission members' basic infantry tactics based on her experience in Afghanistan and elsewhere. She continues to provide outstanding service and is extremely well-respected by all her companions.

One's sexual orientation is truly a private concern. The decision to declare or admit one's sexual preference is a personal decision. However, I believe it is counterproductive to not provide an environment where soldiers are free to admit their sexual orientation without fear of reprisals, prejudice, or career implications. For us, I believe it contradicts our social norms.

As a commander, I'd rather have honest soldiers who are not afraid to admit who they are rather than soldiers who deny accusations or live in a constant state of fear and stress. Otherwise, people are continually concerned about offending others and saying the wrong thing at the wrong time, perhaps inadvertently. But, also, in a close-knit unit, like an infantry company, everyone is left guessing whether or not an individual is a certain way or not, and, as we've already mentioned, the soldiers know at the end of the day. But this depends on commanders establishing and maintaining an environment where soldiers are not concerned about reprisals or repercussions, and without an accommodating environment, soldiers will be less than honest with their chain of command and peers, and this contradicts our soldiers' ethos, in my opinion.

Another consideration is the possible negative effect on gay and lesbian soldiers who are afraid to declare that they are in a relationship and have a spouse, particularly with deployments. We have a military family resource center that's set up to assist with those families left behind when a member deploys, and when there is a gay or lesbian member of the unit who is unwilling to report that they have a spouse, often, they are at odds, as we learned this morning, more susceptible to not being included in the group, and can have an adverse effect on their personal operational effectiveness on the battlefield if they're more concerned about their loved ones back home not being looked after.

At the end of the day, I believe it comes down to leadership. As I mentioned, a person's sexual orientation has no bearing on how well they do their job, and, so, it should not be a factor. If a soldier was harassing others or racist or prejudice or was fraternizing with a member of his or her chain of command and it was affecting their ability to do their job or having a negative

effect on the unit, the chain of command would deal with it. Straight, gay, lesbian, or bisexual, it simply doesn't matter.

In an infantry unit, as you can well imagine, it's about working as a team. Brothers in arms, comrades in arms. It's an environment that demands integrity, honesty, loyalty and professionalism. Part of being a professional, I believe, is accepting people from different backgrounds, races, creeds, religions, and indeed, sexual orientation. Gay or lesbian soldiers are just as effective as straight soldiers. It does not mean they'll be less trustworthy or less brave. As I said, it's simply not an issue for me.

SPEAKER: Good afternoon, it's a pleasure to be here, and I'd like to start with a bit of light humor and say that for most of us gays, we think that straights should be allowed to live their life the way they want to in uniform.

The charter was a great tool that forced some social change, and I won't cover the same grounds because we've been there, but the directive that came down from our leaders was very clear and was lawful. And at the end, most of us on the commission, whichever service we're in, have sworn to carry on lawful orders. So that brought the framework to put personal beliefs and professional duty in the right mindset to bring that around.

The charter forced us not just to look at sexual orientation from a discrimination point of view, but other elements of religions and the like, so we had a framework that was very well oriented from a state of menace to what is our core value and how do we really consult some of the differences that we've had in the past. And the value of service is really what defines us. Anyone that goes through the process of joining training and wears a uniform wants to serve their country.

So respecting that core value and creating the environment in which nondiscrimination could take place, and then applying a principal of procedural fairness in the way we bring those rules to bear at the unit level as we manage the different cases that come, that it be of discipline, that it be of administrative issues, personal management issues or training issues.

It's getting to core what's the problem, respecting the base of service, and making sure that everybody is treating the same way. And that's really one of the important climates in the management of those issues. At the end of the day, and I think most would agree, if you look at the

history of gays in the military during the wars and during conflict, the key issue comes to competence, okay. Competence will bring respect. The fact that we can trust a person because of their competence, that we can put our lives in their hands when on missions is what builds the bonds that exist between service members in combat units. No different in submarine, no different in a ship, slightly difference in the sense that, you know, especially as a captain, I am the dictator of a very small country or a very small city, so they have to suffer me a little bit more than they would otherwise.

But it's creating that climate in which people can be themselves, truly be themselves, comfortable being at work, and then they can be the most productive and contribute the most that he can to the unit, and that's how you build cohesion, and that's how you build operational effectiveness. Thank you.

SPEAKER: Thank you all very much. Go ahead and ask a couple questions here. The first thing I wanted to discuss was, one of the concerns that a lot of commanders have is the privacy issue. It rings -- it's an easy argument that gets brought up. This is like men and women, sir, I don't -- I shouldn't have to take a shower or live with him because it's like men and women. I think, again, when that argument comes out, it's brought up as -- from a very heterosexual point of view, obviously. So have you had any instances where your soldiers or sailors have said -- have used that argument, and if they did, if, for example, they did, how did you handle that situation? Yeah, whoever wants to start.

SPEAKER: Well, I come from a different environment where actually for a number of -- the first 15 years of my career probably the shower at sea issue was a luxury, being a diesel electric -- so when we had the chance to take one, we didn't argue too much and we took it. We haven't had significant issue, and actually in our submarines, we have mixed messing with female sailors, as well as straight men and homosexual men.

And we have a very open base management, so there's a minimum standard of dress that's required. And then we have for the ladies or for those who decide to segregate, they use the officers' heads basically because it's the only one that's kind of semi-private from a shower perspective, so it's been very easy to manage.

Our bond in that environment is very dictated by the unique culture of what it is we do. And once we're at sea, we haven't had much issue with sexual identity or any other identity issue. Actually we don't mind slightly odd people in submarines as long as they're competent, and we know that if things go bad, they know which valve to turn and how to operate the system. So a very unique culture in itself, but we haven't experienced major problems there.

SPEAKER: If I can give an infantry perspective, I think, Nick, you wanted to jump in there?

COL. GRIMSHAW: Sure, I think it sort of comes with the territory, you know. An infantry soldier shouldn't expect to receive a whole lot of privacy, especially in operations, so you have to understand what you're getting into, male, female, straight or gay, it doesn't matter, privacy is something that is not necessarily in abundance in an infantry unit on operations.

We do, however, in the Canadian military, provide a level of privacy between male and female soldiers, so that, in fact, my clerk was a female, as well. And she and this Section 20C, the lesbian NCM in my company, shared quarters, and we put the women together.

I've never experienced any situation where a homosexual in a unit has said, hey, I need to have my own space, because, quite frankly, every member of the unit would like to have their own space at some point regardless of what sexual orientation they are. So -- and, as you know, and as a small unit, as we've already said, the troops know what's going on, they knew who the people are who have a gambling problem, they know who the people are who have more cars than they can afford, they know who likes to watch cartoons and who's good at video games, and who is not very trustworthy, and so privacy will always be an issue, but we don't go out of our way to separate straight from homosexual and lesbian, not at all.

SPEAKER: For privacy, I've had no experience with it. In fact, Nick's comments about privacy -- people get in their room and screen, there's a combination that's provided for, this is possible. I've never, in my experience, had any privacy arguments put to me.

SPEAKER: Yeah, me neither, never had any issue. And like Nick said, especially within infantry units, at the squad and the platoon level, they live 24/7, if you're, like, in missions, like, in Afghanistan or wherever, and I've seen it in Bosnia, where they live for 14 or 20 days on an

outpost where they're quartered with their platoon, privacy is not an issue. And it's also about the team work and the way that they deal with each other, you know, it settles itself. It's about respect, mutual respect, it's about understanding, it's about trust within that level to deal with it.

SPEAKER: I guess the next question is, have any of you had any experiences where there was inappropriate conduct by homosexuals, and then, if so, how was that handled?

SPEAKER: Never.

SPEAKER: Never; hasn't happened to me yet. You know, I would echo the problem, the statements that were made in previous panels, most of the inappropriate behavior issues we have to deal with come in environments where, you know, sometimes it's an alcohol problem, sometimes it's, you know, the files that have come through my desk, military reports of activities that they place -- have nothing to do with sexual orientation whatsoever. There are, you know, social -- more social group issues, too much partying and a loss of good judgment at the moment, but none that's related to sexual orientation.

SPEAKER: I've never experienced homosexual inappropriate conduct in the unit that I've served in. But as a former adjutant, we have removed people for inappropriate conduct between a section commander and one of his soldiers, for example, a male-female relationship, because it's inappropriate fraternization within the chain of command. So the same action would have taken place whether it was a heterosexual or a homosexual relationship by the chain of command.

SPEAKER: I've had no experience of homosexual inappropriate behavior. There's been plenty of sort of inappropriate behavior between heterosexual relations, but they mostly end up involving, you know, alcohol excessively and poor judgment, but nothing specifically on sexual orientation.

SPEAKER: I kind of follow on to that, though. What about instances of conduct that are acceptable: public displays of affection, such as like holding hands, hugging, kissing, those types of things? Did these cause disruptions in a unit if or when they did occur? And do you guys enforce a similar standard for heterosexuals in this regard?

SPEAKER: That one is pretty easy. Within our Dutch Armed Forces, we have a

Code of Conduct or a behavior code, like we said, and that applies to everybody, whether you're a homosexual or a heterosexual. It's not appropriate when you're in uniform doing your job to go kissing or hugging or whatever in your uniform, and that's equal to everybody. So we don't accept that and we hold people accountable for that. And then comes the leadership issue again to hold people accountable for that, if they do so, refer to the Code of Conduct and say, hey, this is not appropriate, you should not do this, but it applies to all categories.

SPEAKER: If I could follow with that, the issue is not about a particular group. As a commander, what we are trying to do is create an environment which is open for all, and so, therefore, the policy needs to apply to all. So if there is something that occurs, you know, inappropriate conduct for a particular organization, we'll all get treated exactly the same as everybody else, so that all servicemen, women, soldiers, sailors, marines and the like, they know that it applies to them. And, therefore, that develops that trust in the chain of command that everybody will be looked after and treated the same.

And so the policy that needs to be set to support commanders needs to apply to everybody, not to a particular group. And it's not been my experience that sexual orientation creates any sort of discernable sort of -- anywhere.

SPEAKER: I have nothing to add, I echo the same comments. It's one policy for all members of the service regardless of sexual orientation, so.

SPEAKER: Okay. Looking at this actually from a combat point of view, I want to start directing the questions so that we can kind of cover a little bit more ground. Colonel, have you noticed in your experiences in leading the troops in combat, have you said that the heterosexual troops treat the homosexual troops of gays and lesbians any differently in terms of levying tasks or missions upon them or ostracizing them or any of that?

SPEAKER: The answer is pretty simple. I've been in operations at company, battalion and brigade level, it has never been an issue. It's about the profession, it's about the professional duty, and it's about, you know, fitting that into the team work, and that's the way it goes. It has not been an issue, in my experience, never.

SPEAKER: Any issues with that?

SPEAKER: I'd just add that it goes back to the issue of competence. When you see this kind of behavior that you're, again, that you're straight, gay, that you're whatever group that's visible and visible minority, it's going to show up and it's more an issue of competence. You look at training failures and issues that you need to correct from that perspective, but it has really nothing to do with sexual orientation.

SPEAKER: Okay. The next one goes to implementation. And what I'm looking at here is, what policies, and this is mostly to Lieutenant Colonel King and Lieutenant Colonel Grimshaw and Cassivi, who were there during the repeal process, were in the service, what policies do you think were particularly effective? If you had to single out something that really worked in your mind, what would it have been from when the policy was changed that helped you and your fellow officers to handle the transition?

COL. KING: I think from my experience very much is that, you know, we in the Australian Defense Force, has annual equity and diversity training which addresses all the groups. So the best thing about it is, you're not singling out a group, you're just -- that each group and each -- you need to be equitable, and we respect diverse organizations and diverse people and how it strengthens. So it's not particularly aimed at the sexual orientation, it's just aimed at the group and has everyone working together as a team, and that's a very, very important message that needs to be, not continually reinforced, but sent to people as they progress through different stages of the organization, either entering it, leaving it or moving throughout it.

SPEAKER: For my experience in the late '90s, there was mandated mandatory diversity training, a sharp training program, I can't remember what the exact acronym was, but -- and it was mandated from the top down and enforced, everyone had to attend this training.

SPEAKER: But it wasn't geared towards just homosexual acceptance within the units. It was religion. It was the introduction, or the acceptance, of aboriginal Canadians in our military. So it was the entire spectrum.

And it was an education program for all ranks because, quite frankly, we needed a bit of a course correction in our military at the time. And it has been extremely beneficial because I think it

reset that sort of azimuth for us, or the moral compass, to make sure that we were indeed in line with the rest of Canadian norms and values. So it was a good thing.

CDR. CASSIVI: Yes, I would echo that because of, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, the application of the charter across the entire spectrum, what really helped, it's nothing was particularly aims, except the statement that there was no discrimination against homosexuals. The policies came very quickly. The change to the administrative policy, to the benefit policies, recognition of same sex couples within our common law status inside the Canadian forces -- all came very quickly thereafter. So it made the application of that transition very easy because the signal was very clear that we were being all inclusive.

If it had been slower, the honesty of the statement and the desire to see it through may have been questioned by some. The application, both from the service members who were gays trying deal with the issue and settle out of to those that were opposed to it, being committed to the change may have been questionable. But I think what really helped is it was a very comprehensive adjustment in a very short period of time where all the elements have been put in place that needed to be put in place, for people to be treated absolutely fairly.

LTC. McLEAN: Okay. The next thing I wanted to talk about was the partner benefits because at the unit level, obviously, you have to incorporate the families into the unit because that tends to really build a lot stronger. As we said, you recruit soldiers, but you retain families. So one of the things is have you had instances of including and how were gay and lesbian partners folded into the family group?

There is some concern among the spouse groups that they won't fit into those groups. Has that been an issue, trying to involve partners into family unit functions?

CDR. CASSIVI: I think I'll open on that one. It hasn't been a problem, actually quite the opposite. I found that most wives are quite happy to meet the gay partner, and they exchange notes on a whole bunch of home-front issues. They realize at the end it's no different. They're spouses. They have the same issues they've living with. Their partner is being deployed and things of that nature. So they already have a base there that they can understand themselves and build up on the relationship and be in full acceptance.

My personal experience has been of an element, particularly from my coworkers and their wives, an element of curiosity -- one, getting to know people and then realizing that they're not that different altogether. Yeah, there's no big deal here. So I think it's, from a social phenomenon, not a big problem.

Actually, most of society, particularly in Canada, have coworkers, even have siblings that are gay, and it's less of an issue than we think at their level.

LTC. GRIMSHAW: I think for the Military Family Resource Center, as I mentioned, that support network that exists, it is very inclusive. We mention please submit the particulars of your spouse or significant other, so that they can assist with the families while a member is deployed. But at the end of the day, it's the individual's decision whether or not they partake in that service, whether it's a straight couple or a homosexual couple.

So as long as they have, the individual has, the option to participate, I think that's the key. But excluding them is counterproductive, and it creates more consternation for the service member in the end.

LTC. KING: I'd certainly agree with what Nick said. When I was battalion commander, we would run regular family morning teas. There would be the battalion ball. There would be a whole range of different social activities to invite families to, and it could be anyone from boyfriend/girlfriend to partner, whatever sexual orientation.

Very good, because what it actually does it reinforces inclusiveness. It reinforces that we are looking after you as a family group, regardless of whether you're a single or a boyfriend/girlfriend or the like. So, in fact, all groups garner a lot of support that we are there to help them, and you can pass the message about.

But as Nick says, you can put it on, whether they attend or not. It doesn't matter. They will learn.

COL. MATTHIJSSEN: In fact, after everything that has been said, what's important is that homosexual partners, so to say, have the same right as straight soldiers and partners, heterosexual partners.

And what I do think is also important is that, and that also came out of the survey in 2006, is do

not make a big issue of it. You know. Act normal. See it as normal. That makes the acceptance a lot better, and that's also the perception of homosexual personnel within the armed forces. Do not make a big issue of it.

LTC. McLEAN: So I guess real quick, down the line, family housing, the gay couple moving into the straight couple and family housing because that military environment there is seen as very tight knit -- kids, et cetera. I don't know if you have any experience with that. But any issues?

CDR. CASSIVI: None whatsoever.

LTC. McLEAN: Is that it, down the line?

LTC. GRIMSHAW: I haven't experienced any issues with that either, no.

LTC. McLEAN: No complaints or problems?

LTC. GRIMSHAW: Not that I'm aware of.

LTC. KING: We haven't had any issues. A lot of our military housing now is off-base as well, which is a bit different. It's dispersed through the community which in some sense makes it easier. But certainly I've had female lieutenant in an interdependent relationship with another lesbian captain, and they've applied for married quarters and got it and lived, and then gone and got their own place. And nobody has batted an eyelid.

COL. MATTHIJSSEN: Well, we don't have the military housing like you have here in the States. So that is a difference because from that perspective the military life, so to say, and the family life is much closer integrated here in the States than it is our country because we don't have families living on bases. So, from that perspective, it's a difference.

LTC. McLEAN: Okay, jumping next to the HIV issue, has there been any concerns among your men and women about combat field transfusions, emergency medical procedures and the transmission? What do you have in place to prevent those problems from occurring?

COL. MATTHIJSSEN: I think that overall, also based on my experience, our personnel has really a lot of confidence in the medical system, and from that perspective it has never been an issue. And within that system, we have all kinds of regulations that make that everything they do and everything that is dealt with is trustworthy, is in accordance with the regulations, et cetera. So, no issue at all.

LTC. KING: For ours, there is no issue. There's a medical screen, but it's for everybody. Transfusions come from anybody as long it's passed the medical screening and the like. So people don't see HIV, Australian soldiers don't see HIV as a specific sexual orientation issue.

LTC. GRIMSHAW: I would argue that we're more concerned about drug users and the fact that somebody who is taking illicit drugs in a unit that's deployed is far more of a concern because they may be far more unreliable and not have their wits about them, than guys who are concerned about contracting HIV/AIDS.

CDR. CASSIVI: We do have national policies on blood services and the pre-screening of people as to if you have a lifestyle in which you may have more chance of being exposed, that you're precluded from giving blood. So there's a whole process for the security of the blood and the blood system, and that's been proven through time, and people are educated at that level. So it's really not a problem from that perspective.

The rest of the themes have been covered.

LTC. McLEAN: Okay. A next question is about it's kind of a special status. Have there been any instances where unit level personnel have been ordered to participate in community events, LGBT, Gay Pride Parades, those types of things? What is the policy on participation in those types of events, or sponsorship of those events?

COL. MATTHIJSSEN: We do have the pride event every year, like most countries do. Our approach has been very open of the last few years. As long as there's respect of the uniform, people are encouraged, if they so desire, to participate in events. But that's really where our line is.

Respect the uniform and, yes, go ahead and celebrate. Recognize the fact that you're part of a great institution that respects the diversity of this country, and that you can serve freely, and we'd encourage others to do so.

LTC. KING: We have the defense Gay and Lesbian Information Service which is on the Internet as well. They've participated in the Sydney Mardi Gras on a number of occasions now. Nobody is ordered to participate in it. It's voluntary.

They don't wear uniforms when they participate, but that's twofold, which I think is understandable as well. When you wear the uniform, then there's conduct that comes with wearing

the uniform. So, where some people might like to relax in a parade and march with their families and enjoy it, you can't necessarily do that when you're wearing a uniform, regardless of whether you're in a heterosexual parade for something or otherwise.

But nobody is ordered, and certainly the defense is represented in those parades.

CDR. CASSIVI: Our policies, I think likewise it is in Canada. Homosexuals are allowed to join in things like Pink Saturday or that type of event, but it has to be sure that those events are kind of decent, so to say -- so not extravagant or excessive type of events. That's not appropriate. But let's say the normal type of events where it's appropriate to wear a uniform and it fits in the type of event it is, people are free to do so.

LTC. McLEAN: Okay. I guess one last question. It has to do with assignments. Have there been any problems with foreign governments, such as giving orders to personnel to Saudi Arabia or to other countries, to including even the United States, where there's a policy or local laws against homosexuality? Has that ever come up as an issue?

CDR. CASSIVI: We've had a few experiences with that, particularly I've had personal friends who were posted to the United States on exchange at the time and were in a same-sex relationship. Our government stood by them as declared by our rules, and eventually the discomfort that existed was put in perspective, and the person was allowed to come and complete their exchange posting.

That being said, there are unique situations. I do have sailors who have been offered foreign posting in the U.S., for example, and have decided to not go because of sexual orientation because they didn't want to feel like they would need to go back into the closet or they didn't feel they could be as open as they are in Canada about who they are and decided to opt out of their posting. That was a personal friend. There were other circumstances, but at the end there's a choice process that goes through.

LTC. GRIMSHAW: I don't have any experience of actual assignments or knowing of personnel who were reluctant to be assigned to a certain area. But in certain leave centers, when soldiers are transiting from operations to places such as the Middle East, where there are strict alcohol policies and things like that, soldiers are, we say, read the riot act. They're read the rules and regulations for the environment that they're in, and it's no different than what kind of rules are allowed

for homosexuality in the environment I would argue. So it's just the same thing.

LTC. KING: I have no real experience with the personal issues on that from my own experience, but I understand that we've had a couple of occasions where it caused a bit of consternation for some, but they then worked through it on an individual level between countries.

COL. MATTHIJSSEN: I don't have any specific experience, but I know that on the individual cases, if it would be an issue, that will be looked upon and the organization would be looking for a solution for that specific case, if that would be the case.

LTC. McLEAN: All right. At this time, we've got about 15 minutes left. So I'd like to go ahead and open it up to the floor for questions.

Yes, on the far right?

SPEAKER: Yes, my name is Stefan Stint . I work with the Veterans and Military Families for Progress, and I'm just here out of interest.

I'm sure you heard in the debate in this country over getting rid of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy an oft-stated parallel has been the integration of the armed forces back in the late 1940s by President Truman. I mean, the formal integration in was in 1948 and then for a while after that it was certainly a work in progress all the way through Vietnam. I believe by the late '40s most of the other countries had also dispensed with any sort of segregation of the races in the militaries and as I mentioned, it's been a controversial thing to use as a parallel.

I was wondering, I think it was Colonel Grimshaw you mentioned in the diversity training about indigenous Canadians, I guess my question is, how have historically the minority service members been integrated into your militaries and if you see that as a legitimate parallel to this issue?

LTC. GRIMSHAW: Certainly for the Canadian Infantry we've had a history of aboriginal Canadians in our ranks for many, many years, and they've been received in different ways depending on the command climate of the units. And there's some famous histories of aboriginals who've done well in the Korean War and places like that.

It was all grouped together in terms of the overall diversity training that we went through so it wasn't targeted specifically at one religion or color or creed. It was to be all-inclusive, to

be more accepting so that there was no prejudice and there was no opportunity for prejudice, and so everyone had equal opportunity and it was just reinforced. Everyone always had equal opportunity but it was reinforced again in a more structured manner to prevent people from having those prejudice views of, well, this individual's gay and, therefore, can't be trusted and couldn't be a commanding officer, and that's absolute rubbish.

So, I think -- I'm not sure if I'm answering your question completely, but it wasn't targeted specifically at one group. It needed to be across the entire spectrum for diversity within the CF.

CDR. CASSIVI: And if I may, I think, what you asked about the parallel is at the end, I mean, I always, when I talk to (inaudible) I always talk about, well, we're the invisible minority as opposed to the visible minority so there are parallels, particularly in the way you adapt policy and the way you approach the problem from a leadership perspective. So it's worth the discussion, I think, when you go through the process. Is it an absolute perfect parallel? No, nothing always is because the stigma or the discomfort is quite different, but if you create an environment in which people are valued for a common value, then you can have that framework and bring all that part.

LTC. McLEAN: Next question. Yes, sir, right there.

MR. BAXLEY: Thank you. I'm Larry Baxley. I'm a gay Navy veteran. I was an intelligence officer for 16 years. My question is -- I have two questions.

First of all, we lobbied Congress last week, about 400 of us, and during that presentation we represented data that one of the biggest concerns that the active duty military had was opening up a new class of equal opportunity complaints. Have you gentlemen seen an increase in complaints from a discrimination standpoint from your homosexual service members? That's my first question.

And the second one is, there is a time when public displays of affection becomes acceptable, and that's a homecoming, a ship pulls back into a pier, families are down there, people go out, they hug, they kiss. Has the homosexual homecoming been a problem in your militaries?

CDR. CASSIVI: From the homecoming point of view, no, and actually, you're right, standards change and those events, some level of display of affection is absolutely normal and

would be inhuman to put the hammer down on that one, for lack of a better perspective. So, I would agree with that.

As far as discrimination complaints, you know, in workplace there's always conflict resolution elements that needs to take place from time-to-time because there are misperceptions as to, I think this person is being hard on me and there's a misunderstanding as to why this relationship is developing that way. But as far as pure discrimination, very little, actually, I say that quick transition and changing of the rules kind of made the process neutral because everybody was being treated the same so it did not create a whole bunch of stigma and an excess burden of administrative workload as a consequence of it actually. Because the package was complete, it wasn't done just halfway; it was relatively complete fairly quickly.

LTC. KING: From our end there was no new increase in equal opportunity complaints at all. Again, I think that, you know, when you've got a policy that addresses everybody and everybody sees that it's applied fairly and equally and equitably, it reinforces the trust in the system, so nobody feels as though they're necessarily any worse off than somewhere else. It's when you actually do discriminate that (inaudible) for you.

In terms of public displays of affection, you know, we have a conduct and discipline act and we talk about, you know, behavior on base and we talk about behavior off base. It applies to everybody, doesn't matter who it is. So, there's been no differentiation between sexual orientation and public displays of affection.

COL. MATTHIJSSEN: Yeah, that's the same for us in the Netherlands, like Mick said.

LTC. McLEAN: Okay, Peter.

MR. SINGER: It strikes me there's two things here -- sorry, Pete Singer from Brookings. There's often a difference between generational views on this topic, and we're seeing that in the U.S., and it might have been the same within your nations of sort of an old guard view versus younger generations in terms of social acceptance including within the military. And the second is, the military, while you have the idea of, you know, formal policy and top-down chain of command, there's also often a mentor relationship either formally within a chain of command or

maybe with someone who's retired. What were you being told by your mentors as you were going through this transition? What was the kind of advice or what were you hearing from them? That's the first question.

And then the second is, we in the U.S. have an opportunity in a sense to do a little bit like what we're doing right now. Maybe this is a leading question, but would you have benefitted from the ability to hear from officers from other nations who've gone through this kind of transition? So, for example, an infantry officer being able to reach out to an infantry officer from, at the time, you know, be it the Netherlands or Australia, who'd already gone through that? Or would you have had an attitude of, you know what, they may be an infantry officer or a submarine commander, whatever it is, but they don't know my military? That's one of the discourses that we're hearing here and I wonder if you can comment on that.

COL. MATTHIJSSEN: Let me start with the last one. In 1974, I was 12 years old, so I wasn't even thinking about taking a career in the military, but the point from that is when I joined the military the policy was already in place. Did I benefit from mentors? No, I kind of made up my own mind, so to say, and I as a person believe that everybody should be able to work in an organization if he wants to, whatever his background. You know, it's the profession that counts, it's the way you do your duty, that is what counts, not the sexual preference that you have or whatever diversity. That is what counts.

I think we always can benefit from other experiences, to your last question. That is always worthwhile, you know, to see what others have experienced and take the best from that for your own situation but you have to be aware to apply the things to your own situation and look at the circumstances or the environment that others have experienced because things might be different.

LTC. KING: In terms of generational views, we're all certainly younger, there wasn't Twitter, Facebook, computers, social networking or the like, and so mentors would be someone who would have a chat with you about something and they'd give you a point of view. Generally as a junior officer, you're reasonably educated to discern what you felt and understood anyway.

In terms of other views, you know, much like anything else, they should be welcome. You don't have to agree with someone else's other views, but you should understand it.

And that will help you to make a more informed decision yourself. So, you should always welcome someone else's vies. You don't have to agree, but you should understand the point of view. That's a clear path to success as far as I'm concerned.

LTC. GRIMSHAW: In terms of mentorship, I would have to say as we went through our policy or our programs of diversity training, it was really up to the commanding officers and the senior level leadership to set those conditions. It would have been very counterproductive if the policy came out and the commanding officer of infantry battalion said, right, this just came through, but I don't believe in it, and rip it up and say, if there's any gay people in my unit you've got no business being here. That would have been completely counterproductive and illegal. But the commanding officers set those conditions for mentorship to say, this is the policy gentlemen -- ladies and gentlemen, and it's a good policy. Let's get on with it because we'll be better off as a result, a very positive spin on what we're doing. And there were naysayers, and there will always be naysayers, but they became a pretty quick minority in the units and as it was an evolutionary process, as you mentioned, generational views. My kids in elementary school right now, there are same-sex parents, their friends have same-sex parents, and so I would argue in a few years it will be even less of an issue than it is today for a lot of the generations as we go through this.

And in terms of benefitting from other army's experiences, absolutely. It's part of the profession. We benefit from a collective education, a collective response, or collective viewpoints to see the full spectrum of views on issues, I think, is the better way to do it.

And I use the example of, it wasn't that long ago where Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder was an issue that nobody wanted to talk about that. If anybody was seen to be suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress they were a malingerer, they had no business being in the unit, they were weak, they were chastised, and they were often ostracized and kicked out. Now, we talk openly about PTSD. After a gun battle or an incident where soldiers' lives are lost, it's very common for us to all sit around and talk about the issue because we understand what PTSD and operational stress injuries can do to units and soldiers.

And so we've educated ourselves as a result of our shared experiences, not just within the Canadian forces but among allies, and I think it's prudent to do so, and, again, we've

become a better force as a result. We have less incidents of soldiers coming back with post-traumatic stress because we all have a better understanding and accept it as, hey, this is part of the hazard of the job that we're in.

So, maybe it's a bit of a stretch of an analogy, but it's that education process, willingness to talk about it openly and in an environment where you can voice your opinion and hear the opinions of others as well. So, I think it's very prudent to do so.

CDR. CASSIVI: And just (inaudible) sharing, I think everything else has been mentioned quite well, but we are, as military officers and as soldiers, airmen, and sailors from allied nations, we're from a comparative framework, we pretty much have the same set of corporate values, if we're going to use that expression. You know, a soldier is a soldier, a sailor is a sailor, and we see that time and time again even in non-allied navies when we go to port visits around the world, that it be in Russia, or elsewhere, where there ain't a lot of difference between a sailor and a sailor and I would imagine it's not that different across the bases.

It is also easy to find a whole bunch of differences, especially when you get culture into that because we do have -- we all have cultural differences because we come from different places. It's using the right base for comparison and not being too emotional about it, but being very pragmatic. But that's outside of our limits. That's what the political arena exists for and all of you contribute to that quite effectively. So, finding that common ground.

LTC. McLEAN: Thanks, Luc. What we'd like to do now is try and bundle two or three succinct questions, so I ask that if you have a question, minimize any of the lead in to it and let's get to the meat of it. So, any remaining questions out there?

MR. KAPRA: Well, I'm Ori from the Israeli Behavioral Science Center. I just know that some militaries take special steps to address different minorities in order to attract, for example, women. You know, that you advertise women's service options. And I'd like to hear if you know of any such steps that your military has taken. I know a bit about the Dutch case --

LTC. McLEAN: So, like recruiting? A recruiting focus towards homosexuals?

MR. KAPRA: Yeah.

LTC. McLEAN: Okay. Another question?

MS. BOOTH: I'm Allison Booth from the Naval Academy and I'm just curious -- I'm struck by the uniformity of your responses. I'm just curious whether you see yourselves as representative of the organizations you come from. I feel like I could find people like that in any organization but whether you see yourselves as kind of expressing what you think of as a majority view.

LTC. McLEAN: All right, so whether you guys think you're the odd ones out?

CDR. CASSIVI: Well, I've always been the odd one out in some ways.

LTC. McLEAN: Is there a third question that we can wrap into this real quick? If not, I'll go ahead and turn it over to the panelists. Okay, one more. I think we can fit these three in. I think they're going to be fairly --

MS. STANLINK: Hi, I'm Christie Stanlink from the Naval Academy. I had a question about diversity training, especially from top down which I think is imperative but at the same time that individualism of the people who are receiving the training sometimes balks at diversity training as too PC, too sensitive, and I'm just wondering what sorts of -- what advice you've got to be able to get over that hurdle?

LTC. McLEAN: Okay, so we've got recruiting, uniformity of opinion, and diversity question. I'd ask that you just -- just one of you tackle each one of these and move on down.

We'll start with the recruiting issue. Anybody have anything to add on recruiting?

CDR. CASSIVI: No specific targeting but more presence in recruiting presence in gay pride events, for example, we've had a few of those and tried to extend the blueprint but no quotas, no forced, not false targets of that nature. That gets us into a down spiral approach.

LTC. McLEAN: If I could add to that to -- what about promotions? Is there anything that promotion quotas that highlight a homosexual and you have set limits that you're trying to promote?

CDR. CASSIVI: Absolutely not.

LTC. McLEAN: This is not identified in any of the records?

CDR. CASSIVI: No, there is no promotions guidelines based on whatever minority. You are promoted based on competence.

LTC. KING: Can I just say, in terms of recruiting, you know, the Australian Defense Force doesn't recruit on a sexual orientation, we just promote ourselves as an open and diverse employer and an employer of choice to attract, you know, as many people as we possibly can.

In terms of if there's a majority view, well, certainly before this panel I rang a number of COs that I'd served with to ask for their personal experiences and they're entirely consistent with mine. It's not just the organizational view, it is what we do, to be quite frank.

For diversity training, there's nothing better than a CO standing up in front of a battalion and saying, this is what I believe in. It doesn't become PC when the CO says, this is important. This is what it's about. I believe in this, now let's get on with it. You know? It's not PC. It's not anything else other than saying, yeah, this is important to us and this is what we are and this is what we do.

CDR. CASSIVI: I think just to add on the, are we the odd one outs or are we just representing the organization, I think what you see is -- are four different commanders who've worked in different theaters that have lived through this process or have grown up in an organization where those policies were in place and coming here from those different experiences we come to the same conclusion in the application of leadership in our units. That's basically what it means.

COL. MATTHIJSSEN: A few remarks on recruiting in the Netherlands. There's no specific targeting towards homosexuals, so to say. We try to propagate the organization as open to everybody and again it's the profession that counts. Diversity training, we have that included in our initial training and in our career courses for NCOs and officers. But what also is important and Mick said that also, is the role of the commanders. You know, commanders are the ones that have a fairly large role in, you know, getting the climate and the atmosphere and the culture within units that is appropriate and the right climate for diversity to prosper, so to say.

I do not consider myself representative -- well, I may say so, but I'm not sure, let me put it this way, whether I'm representative for the Dutch Armed Forces as a commander, but this is what I think and I know a lot of my colleagues think that as well, but I can't say that all of them do.

LTC. McLEAN: Okay. All right, well, I thank you all very much for your comments today. Thank you all for coming. Again, a very informative panel and from very experienced

commanders who have obviously seen the application of these policies over the last 20 or more years of your careers. So, again, I thank you all for coming, and after this we'll have a short break so we can get back on schedule. Thank you. (Applause)