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## Commentary & Reply

David Wood

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# *Commentary & Reply*

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## *Embedding: More Background*

### **To the Editor:**

I was delighted to read Lieutenant Commander Brendan R. McLane's generally positive appraisal of embedded media during the Iraq War ("Reporting from the Sandstorm: An Appraisal of Embedding," Spring 2004). To amend the record on two points:

- As far as I am aware, it was the Marine Corps and I who pioneered modern embedding in 1992, when a Newhouse News Service photographer and I joined a Marine Expeditionary Unit for a year. The Marines had agreed that we would have unrestricted access to everything that happened during that year, including classified missions in Somalia. With no assistance (or, for that matter, notice) from the Defense Department, we resolved all the issues that arose. The result was an intense and extremely profitable experience on both sides.

- In 2002 the Army and I pioneered the concept of embedding a journalist into the command center of a highly sensitive and in part classified operation, Anaconda. With the active encouragement of the task force commander, Major General F. L. Hagenbeck, the public affairs officer, the C-2, and I negotiated and signed an agreement that gave me and my photographer unfettered 24-hour access to the command center and its staff and resources. I was free to write what I considered appropriate, but I had to submit all copy to the intelligence officer before transmission. Our agreement spelled out in detail what could and what could not be edited out of my copy. Again, the arrangement worked superbly well; I was able to report accurately (and dramatically) from the eye of the storm—without compromising the operation. The Army got its story told, and newspaper readers got deeper insights and a more human-dimension flavor of the operation than they could get from Washington-based reporting.

Both of these experiences demonstrate that it is possible for experienced journalists to gain the insights that embedding allows, at all levels, without compromising either our independence or our accuracy.

David Wood  
National Security Correspondent, Newhouse News Service  
Washington, D.C.

### **The Author Replies:**

David Wood's two personal examples read like superb cases of embedding done correctly. The results then please both the military and the press. As he would probably agree, this needs to be the way of the future. Reporters like Wood, Rick Atkinson, and Tom Ricks have the type of credentials on which the

military can justify the disclosure of even classified information, since both sides trust each other.

On a side note, it is interesting that Wood's first embedding experience was with the Marine Corps. The Marines do seem to pioneer relations with the press, as with Tom Ricks' *Making the Corps*. However, in the aftermath of Operation Iraqi Freedom, some have argued that the pendulum of access should swing back the other way. Their argument is that the next conflict might not be as successful or quick as the one in Iraq, and thus embedded coverage could undermine military operations.

Perhaps the press coverage of the occupation could serve as a case study for the future. Many positive and negative stories have made it to the front page, and an analysis could be made of whether the military believes the coverage has been accurate and fair. Anecdotally, I have read many e-mails describing very positive experiences from officers serving in Iraq, officers who believe their side of the story is not being told.

Lieutenant Commander Brendan McLane, USN

## *Can Reading Clausewitz Save Us?*

### **To the Editor:**

Professor Bruce Fleming's article on the misuse of Clausewitz ("Can Reading Clausewitz Save Us from Future Mistakes?" Spring 2004) has a poetry—a set of internal contradictions—of its own. It was entertaining, even amusing, and yet it can hardly be taken seriously. I agree wholeheartedly with the author that Clausewitz's work cannot be used as a formula for how to do war and strategy right, and that, regrettably, many commentators have attempted to use him in this way. This argument has been made before.

However, Fleming goes further, insisting that the internal contradictions in Clausewitz's work make it impossible to understand him; in other words, if we think we have him right, we're probably wrong. Even if that were true, however, it would not be a good reason to give up trying to understand the puzzle. The value of any great work lies in the fact that it challenges us to reflect on what we think we already know.

Understanding Clausewitz may be difficult, but it is not impossible. To be sure, *On War* required more editing than its author probably realized. Yet, Fleming has made it seem more confusing than it is by overlooking some key points about Clausewitz's views regarding the role of theory. In *On War*, Clausewitz does not claim that *all* theories are useless, just "positive" or predictive ones, such as those proposed by Jomini, Lloyd, and Bülow. These were products of the arrogance of Enlightenment thinking—as were the works of Malthus, Smith, and Ricardo, which gave us certain timeless socio-economic "laws"—and purported to have the secret to favorable battlefield outcomes. It was indeed Clausewitz's lifelong ambition to develop a theory of war, but he discovered that such a theory would have to be de-

scriptive rather than predictive. It could only explain the dynamic forces at work in war, forces that make war an unpredictable enterprise, even if they do not entirely eliminate the *probability* of success in certain situations. In terms of military thinking, this was a revolutionary approach for Clausewitz's day.

It is unfortunate that Fleming missed this elementary but important point, for it undermines his entire argument that Clausewitz was unable to reconcile the metaphysical with the physical. Dr. Fleming's complaint that Clausewitz's theory seems to bounce from one realm to the other is because *On War* is about more than one kind of theory. But all is not lost—by criticizing some of Clausewitz's commentators for trying to use his work as a guide, then criticizing Clausewitz for not providing such a guide, the author provides us with a poetry of his own.

Lieutenant Colonel Antulio J. Echevarria II  
Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College

#### **To the Editor:**

Periodically, some pundit decides to blow the whistle on Clausewitz. As Clausewitz's self-appointed American PR flack, I feel obliged to respond to such efforts with good humor, but the attacker sets the asperity level. Ultimately, Dr. Bruce Fleming's critique is not so much of Clausewitz as of the prescriptive misuse of his descriptive, explanatory theory by charlatans and ideologues and the abuse of individual Clausewitzian nuggets ripped out of context. But he also rejects the effort required to get what Clausewitz truly offers: sustained and intimate contact with one of the great minds of history as it confronts the confusing phenomenon of war. His method is condescending, starting with a strawman question that leads nowhere and concluding with an attempt to shut down thought: We "can't use [Clausewitzian theory] as a stick to beat anyone with—unless we are prepared to have it used on us in turn." The net effect is a sophomoric rejection of ugly, concrete reality and the friction it imposes on those who would think, write, advocate, and act. Of course we're going to use ideas (including Clausewitz's) as weapons in our disagreements over policy and strategy. And there is no guarantee the right ideas will win. Welcome to the real world.

The obvious answer to Fleming's inane title question is, Why yes, of course reading Clausewitz *can* save us from future mistakes, especially mistakes on exam questions about Clausewitz (a lesson writers like Martin van Creveld and John Keegan might well ponder to their own benefit). And reading Clausewitz *can* save us from future errors in actually waging war, as could reading *The New York Times*. But the question Professor Fleming is really asking is, *Will* reading Clausewitz necessarily save us from military mistakes? To which the answer is, obviously, no. We must also think about what we are reading and doing, and get them right—or, at least, more right than our opponents. Even then, sheer bloody chance may intervene to negate our brilliance.

The right question is, Does Fleming have a better reading suggestion to offer? Personally, I know of no better theoretical basis for analysis and debate than *On War*, though we should feel free to challenge any element of it as we see fit.

There is no contradiction in praising Clausewitz for providing the theoretical basis while holding him irresponsible for the outcome. He's dead. Our errors are our own. When we get it right—hey, let's share a little credit with our mentors. Fleming's only practical proposal is that we teach *On War* as poetry. While this may be appropriate to his duties as an English professor—the book's key passages do indeed have poetry's power to invoke a rich universe of ideas and possible meanings in a few short lines—it sounds as if he doesn't really much care for such poetry.

Much of Fleming's analysis of Clausewitz's argument is very good. Unlike many Clausewitz-bashers, he appears to have read large parts of the book he criticizes. Still, there are some important weirdities. For instance, Fleming makes reference to Clausewitz's "distaste for 'irregular' wars." I wonder: Does anyone sane have a taste for such wars? Clausewitz, however, unlike Jomini (with whom Fleming appears to confuse him), insisted that such conflicts were in fact a valid form of warfare and had to be dealt with by any useful military theory. His complaint about Clausewitz's "metaphysical" approach applies only to one 14-page chapter and ignores the other 500+ pages, mostly devoted to quite practical issues. This first chapter is indeed abstract, but then, so is our very notion of war as a phenomenon. Clausewitz's overall approach is ruthlessly empirical—it rejects the normative, predictive approach to theory because that approach consistently fails in the real world.

What is most puzzling in Fleming's critique is that he understands Clausewitz's dialectical method yet seems to deny that Clausewitz himself understood it. It is undeniably true, as Fleming puts it, that both the Bible and *On War* are "so broad in scope, so inclusive, even of contradictions internal to themselves, that they can be used to justify almost anything." Both books are routinely abused by little minds, desperate to find certainty in arbitrary rules and eager to impose them on everyone else. Nonetheless, I doubt that we would be able to conduct a truly penetrating discussion of ethics without reference to the one or of war without reference to the other. Clausewitz combines Enlightenment and Romanticism, not because he was confused, but because war has both rational and irrational roots and characteristics. The subject itself is complex and internally contradictory, and our understanding is clouded by many faulty preconceptions that have to be dispelled along the way to clarity. Absolute war was never meant as a practical description or prescription. It is part of the initial thesis statement, which Clausewitz then goes on to challenge and demolish. The blunt statement that "war is merely an expression of policy," when Clausewitz first offers it, is his antithesis—which he also goes on to challenge and demolish. Fleming fails to understand Clausewitz's final synthesis and assessment of the nature of war, expressed as the "Fascinating Trinity." Clausewitz made no effort to prescribe the proper mix of the elements he actually listed (*not* "people, army, and government") because his point was that they—and the relationships among them—are not under our control. Evidently, Fleming took his own advice on this issue (i.e., "Don't try to figure it out").

Fleming's complaint essentially boils down to whining that Clausewitz fails to convey the full scope of war's complexity in a single catchy phrase. Un-

fortunately, no human mind can grasp, let alone express, the physical and psychological complexity of politics and war in one bold stroke. However, while there is a great deal of intellectual distance covered in Clausewitz's famously difficult—but short—dialectical analysis of the nature of war, this is little excuse for not bothering to read, digest, and critique it as a whole. I suspect that Fleming actually does understand much of it, in which case his essay is merely an academic exercise in literary deconstruction, not strategic analysis.

Clausewitz said that a strategy is a good one if we can do nothing better. If Professor Fleming is correct that Clausewitz's approach to fundamental military theory is not a good one, then he must be able to offer us something better. Please alert us when he does.

Dr. Chris Bassford  
Professor of Strategy, National War College

#### **To the Editor:**

I won't address Professor Fleming's misinterpretations of Kant and Plato. It should be noted, however, that Professor Fleming, like almost all people who purport to be quoting Clausewitz, in fact quotes him carelessly. He did not say that "war is a continuation of policy [or politics: the German is *Politik*] by other means." Clausewitz said: "War is nothing but a continuation of political intercourse, with an admixture of other means." The German is: "*Der Krieg ist nichts als eine Fortsetzung der politischen Verkehrs mit Einmischung anderer Mittel.*" [*Vom Kriege*, Book V, ch. VI] To overlook his classification of war as a form of intercourse ("*Verkehr*" can include communication and commerce) is to miss the heart of his theory of war. He introduces the idea more briefly in Book I, ch. I, sec. 24: "War is . . . a real political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, a carrying out of the same by other means." The heading of this section is "War is a mere continuation of policy by other means," but this is to be regarded as mere shorthand for the fuller version. Carelessness in quotation is always a sign of carelessness in interpretation. If readers of Clausewitz (or any author, for that matter) paid attention to what he actually wrote, they'd get a lot more out of him.

Michael David Rohr  
Professor Emeritus, Department of Philosophy  
Rutgers University, Newark, New Jersey

#### **The Author Replies:**

*On War* is an interesting text because it's a little metaphysics, a little history, some poetry, and a lot of Clausewitz. But it's a text like any other from its time, with a context, a reason for coming to be, and descriptions of the world its author knew. Of course it will be part of any study of "Theoretical Considerations of War." The text itself is neutral; the problem is the use it's now put to. As I suggested and Professor Bassford implicitly agrees, now it's right up there with the

Bible, taught as a foundation document on which all others are somehow commentaries. The result is sound and fury signifying nothing. Only someone such as Lieutenant Colonel Echevarria who accepts, as I do not, that we must start from this one text, would embrace these problems as part of the challenge rather than as a frustrating waste. Dr. Bassford gets in some macho swagger too on this subject: Fleming is “whining,” and needs to be “welcome[d] to the real world.” Sure, an intellectual rugby pile is fun. But gee. I thought we were talking about something more serious than that. Like war.

Not that being a “challenge” has ever stopped a text from being used as such a foundation document. To non-Muslims, for example, the *Holy Qur’an* (Koran) seems largely impenetrable. It’s not arranged in story form as the Christian Gospels are, but in order from longest chapter (*sura*) to the shortest. It’s always read in the language of its transmission, classical Arabic, now quite foreign even to believers. It refers to events of the time without explaining them. Some *suras* even start with what in Arabic is nonsense. What was Gabriel’s (or God’s) intention here? Opinions vary, as they do on many issues raised by the Koran. Still, millions gain hope and inspiration from something that for outsiders is merely a frustrating oddity, and regard challenges in understanding it as part of the way to earn merit in the hereafter.

In the secular world, where I hope we still are with Clausewitz, people can decide to reject any particular foundation document, or indeed reject having such a foundation document at all. When I lived in the walled city of West Berlin, I soon realized that all theory in the East had to refer to a quote, no matter how fragmentary, from Marx and Lenin. The bookstores in East Berlin were filled with piles of the Complete Works of these two so-seminal thinkers. Now, voilà: no Wall, no piles of Marx and Lenin, no necessity to comb the works of the Masters to justify everything. And somehow life goes on.

Professor Bassford expresses doubt that we’d be able to teach ethics without the Bible or war without Clausewitz. Of course we can teach war without Clausewitz. War is a human activity, like building cities or growing crops. We can study it as an activity. Why have people done it in the past? What did they hope to gain? Did they gain these things? Some people have even suggested somewhat sadly, as Chris Hedges does in his penetrating recent book *War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, that war is a human tendency—something we do to give meaning to our lives, as inescapable in its own way as, say, eating.

Let’s imagine that the Culinary Institute of America, devoted to the study of another human activity, started all its students on a course with a single text somehow taken as primary to all others, a text raising the questions in a philosophical way of “What is Cooking? What is Eating?” I imagine most people other than the professors who had set the course up would find this fairly bizarre. Sure, we’d probably say: go ahead and study the Great Banquets of All Time, and by all means learn all those recipes. But we don’t need metaphysics to study a human activity. Nor, to return to my original point, can we hope that looking at such a consideration of “What X Is” will help us predict the future, tell us how to do X. Of course—to echo some of the points of Echevarria and Bassford—it can

give us vocabulary, a set of rubrics to analyze the world. But it's not going to determine what we do; people who want to do things differently will find a way.

Consider what used to be the foundation document of the subject matter of my Ph.D., literary theory: Aristotle's *Poetics*, used for centuries the way Clausewitz is frequently used today. Aristotle, revered in the Middle Ages so utterly he was called "The Philosopher," had solved all things for all time. Many writers wrote plays the way he said to do (or at least following their understanding of this); plays were lauded or denounced based on how closely they followed "the rules."

Not everyone fell in line. Is Hamlet a tragic hero in Aristotle's sense? Did this mean Shakespeare wasn't writing tragedies? Would it matter if he wasn't? And what about 20th-century works such as Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, a classic apparently of a different kind? Is it okay to write non-Aristotelian drama? Brecht decided it was. Maybe Aristotle was just describing the plays he knew, those of his contemporary Sophocles, and mistook the elephant's tail for the elephant.

By all means read Clausewitz as one of many in a course on "Theories of War," and discuss the very difficulties I'm talking about (Clausewitz knew they were there too). Also, I'd say, include not-so-metaphysical works like John Keegan's now-classic *The Face of Battle*, or Barbara Tuchman's fascinating book *The March of Folly* that considers wars from the Trojan to Vietnam to ask why it is that countries pursue bad policies so relentlessly. And Chris Hedges situates the battles most strategy courses focus on in their larger context of ripple effects in *What Every Person Needs to Know About War*. But let's leave out the pretense of a foundation document, even if the lieutenants and captains sitting in the courses, being (bless them) typically people of action, just want a take-home point. At Annapolis, midshipmen say: "Just give me the gouge, Prof." I say: "No."

As for Professor Rohr, I have to assume he knows that the single most quoted phrase of Clausewitz is the title phrase I've in fact considered, not the text phrase he points out I don't. Yes sir, that's why I considered it. I'm grateful to the good Professor, however, for merely dismissing me from his class for incompetence rather than actually exposing my lamentable ignorance of Kant and Plato for all the world to see.

Dr. Bruce Fleming  
US Naval Academy

## *Civil-Military Relations at the Top*

### **To the Editor:**

I read with interest Colonel Richard Hooker's defense of the US military against the charge that it "operates freely in a charged political environment 'to impose its own perspective' in defiance of the principle of civilian control" ("Soldiers of the State: Reconsidering American Civil-Military Relations," Winter 2003-04). While agreeing that the allegation, as laid, is mistaken for the reasons he points out, I would tentatively suggest that he shares a larger misconception

with the critics in accepting that the question at issue concerns military bearing alone. It seems to me arguable that the charge quoted above can more easily be substantiated if one looks instead at the indifferent quality of civilian control.

On this view, the US society is facing a predictable long-term effect of the defeat in Vietnam, namely the purpose and achievement of General William E. DePuy in establishing the Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). The result of this historic achievement has, I suggest, been to shift the balance of intellectual power in civil-military relations very substantially in favor of the military. Any close student of the US professional military literature over the past few decades can see that, irrespective of service or rank, an area of defensible intellectual terrain has been sought and attained, such that never again will the US military be sent down the garden path by the "best and the brightest." This has nothing to do with the offensive "praetorian tendency" which is the central issue in classic civil-military relations theory as propounded by Finer, Huntington, and others. It has all to do with the defensive wish not to be ordered around by nincompoops. Military leaders know that they must earn the respect of the led. Why do civilian leaders seem not to care about this?

There are more aspects to this notion than can be conveniently discussed in the space of a commentary, but I suggest that it is more plausible to diagnose a comparatively weak civilian approach to military-political realities than to assert an overbearing military one. If so, then Colonel Hooker must be in error to the extent that he seeks to refute the critics by denying the gap. The gap is wide, and is growing wider.

It is clearly not in the interests of the United States or its allies to seek to reduce the gap by allowing critics to effect a dumbing-down of the intellectual caliber of the US armed forces, although anyone who revisits the pages of Allan Bloom's 1987 classic, *The Closing of the American Mind*, can form vivid ideas of why and how such a process could be encouraged. Media and academic coverage of military policy issues affords many examples. A better solution might conceivably involve a redefinition of the civil-military division of labor, so that the formulation of military policy no longer reflects a competition between civilian and military inputs, but rather a fusion of both. This perhaps represents the ultimate stage in "joint" thinking (for which the current appointment of a top soldier as top diplomat provides a conspicuous US precedent), although it may not be as innovative as it looks. At the higher end, it involves the concept of the "ambassador general" in charge of both the combat force and the postwar reconstruction administration. At the lower end, General Krulak's conception of the "strategic corporal," while perhaps unrealistic in terms of the training challenge, certainly identified the need for a form of mixed-ability soldiering, which seems to be very close to the constabulary role of the British armed forces in the days of the Empire.

The purpose of this commentary, however, is not to float fanciful ideas badly in need of historical elaboration. It is rather to suggest that Colonel Hooker might be misguided in attempting to defend military virtue, when the true task may be to expose and repair civilian vice. If the system is broke at one end, it seems idle to maintain that it ain't broke at the other. A modern theory of civil-military relations is needed to deal with a situation in which the military can out-

perform the civil authority in military policy, not on an ad hoc but on a systematic basis, without laying itself open to the charge of insubordination.

Simon King  
Research Director, Military Policy Research  
Oxford, United Kingdom

**The Author Replies:**

Mr. King's comments are thoughtful and perceptive. While I appreciate that the qualifications of the civilian leadership in the Defense Department may be the subject of scholarly commentary, it seems to me that for the professional military such concerns are out of bounds. Our civilian masters are appointed by duly constituted political leaders through constitutional means, and for the military that is enough. It is for others to weigh their merits and demerits. Over time our system has worked remarkably well to balance the strategic requirements of the civilian leadership with the realities and necessities of military operations. As in any system that distributes power widely to avoid excessive concentration in any one branch or organ of government, there can be inefficiencies and disconnects. But these are as likely to stem from service parochialism or a more narrow military perspective as from any deficiency in the quality of the civilian leadership. In general I think it is fair to say that our civil-military arrangements have stood the test of time.

My specific purpose was to provide a counterpoint to those who insist that the military has somehow overstepped its bounds. In my view the military has the right to be heard, and to provide unfiltered military advice and expertise to the civilian leadership in both the executive and legislative branches. It does not and should not have the right to decide, or pass institutional judgment on its superiors. Three centuries ago a British sergeant of the 58th Foot said "Our King is answerable to God for us. I fight for him. My religion consists in a firelock, open touch-hole, good flint, well rammed charge, and seventy rounds of powder and ball. This is the military creed." Not much has changed since then. Our business is to fight our nation's wars. It is for others to tell us where and when to fight. America's soldiers would have it no other way.

Colonel R. D. Hooker, Jr.  
Fort Bragg, North Carolina

*On "An Alternative Future Force"*

**To the Editor:**

I read your Winter 2003-04 edition with more than passing interest. Specifically, "An Alternative Future Force: Building a Better Army," by Peter A. Wilson, John Gordon IV, and David E. Johnson, certainly captured my attention.

I have been retired for 20 years, but I stay in touch with the Army I served for 31 years because my son is a colonel in the Army and my daughter served as

a company commander in the Gulf War. I am well attuned to the DOD guidance related to “transformation,” and I suspect the personnel at all the service schools are squirming in their seats.

The former Army Chief of Staff’s “Objective Force” seemed like a sensible approach to achieve a more transportable and responsive Army without the loss of lethality. The timeline was also logical and prudent.

In the “Alternative Force” article, I could tell the authors were “dancing on the head of a pin” as imprudent alternatives were being advanced. There was an obvious attempt to slow down the transformation train and recognize that it simply is not achieved by the stroke of a pen.

Whatever force is arrived at, there are several time-tested axioms that remain valid. The first is that you must organize and train the way you are going to fight. The second relates to the doctrine, which is the consequence of what you do (experience), what you teach (in the service schools), and then what goes into a field manual. In essence, doctrine is written in the blood of those who have gone before us and paid the price for mistakes on the battlefield.

Based on what I read and hear, Secretary Rumsfeld and the new Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA) are exhibiting exceptional impatience with the institutional Army’s reluctance to field a force without the requisite testing, evaluation, and doctrine development.

The CSA’s recent guidance to senior Army leaders is not necessarily a function of “Do the right thing”—rather, “Do what’s right.” The latter ought to be sufficient license to the doctrine community to proceed with purpose and prudence.

As a final comment, let’s not fall into the 1950s Maxwell Taylor Pentomic Division “well.” Three regiments were converted to five battle groups. Colonels were commanding captains and it was an abysmal failure—thus, ROCID (Reorganization of Current Infantry Division) and ROTAD (Reorganization of the Airborne Division) in the early 1960s.

One hopes that we learned something.

Brigadier General Nathan C. Vail, USA Ret.  
Fort Worth, Texas

**To the Editor:**

In the article “An Alternative Future Force: Building a Better Army,” by Peter A. Wilson, John Gordon IV, and David E. Johnson (Winter 2003-04), I believe the authors took a simplified approach when recommending that corps artillery should become part of the reserve component and that this should be done as a gesture toward greater joint integration.

Precision fires using ground-based artillery/mortar systems are currently under development, and those types of capabilities should be acquired in order to complement munitions fired from air-based platforms. I would not necessarily limit precision-based fires to a particular service or platform type but instead take a joint complementary approach. A quick review of the 2003-2004 *Army Green Book*, starting on page 299, would have provided an excellent source of information.

Second, the headquarters of the 214th and the 41st Field Artillery brigades, along with a total of three corps MLRS (multiple-launch rocket system) battalions did deploy in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and were instrumental in deep interdiction fires against command and control targets and counter-battery fire and SEAD (suppression of enemy air defenses) fires using rocket and missile fires. I refer to the following article, "The Sound of Thunder," *Field Artillery Journal* (September-October 2003) regarding V Corps Artillery's role in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Lieutenant Colonel Tom Tracy  
Instructor, Department of Joint Military Operations  
US Army Command and General Staff College  
Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas

**The Authors Reply:**

It is clear that we have a difference of opinion with General Vail as to what "Do what's right" means for the Army. We stand by our position that the transformation strategy proposed by General Shinseki, which has prompted the requirement to rapidly create a family of armored fighting vehicles that stays within the payload and volume constraints of a C-130, is neither "logical" nor "prudent." We note a recent GAO report, "The Army's Future Combat Systems' Features, Risks, and Alternatives" by Paul L. Francis, which suggests similar conclusions as those articulated in our article. In fact, this report confirms that our estimate of the cost of deploying a single Unit of Action (UA) is likely to be much more than the \$4 to \$5 billion estimate that we made in the article. The report estimates that the cost to procure 15 UAs is above \$90 billion. Further, the GAO highlights that many elements of the FCS program require the mastery of very high technological risk in an unprecedented short period of development. Given these budgetary realities, technological risk, and debatable operational and strategic requirements, we believe that a serious debate within and outside the Army about the FCS program is appropriate at this time.

We stand corrected by Lieutenant Colonel Tracy, who commented that two headquarters for two field artillery brigades with three MLRS battalions did deploy in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. On the other hand, we note that our overall point remains valid that the role of corps-level artillery was substantially lower than during Operation Desert Storm. The emergence of Air Force and Navy aviation as a powerful form of all-weather direct and close air support has been acknowledged by the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Peter Schoomaker, who has initiated a dramatic re-rolling of corps-level artillery units in both the active and reserve structure. This re-rolling is designed to create much-needed units more relevant to the Army's requirements during this contested period of our occupation of Iraq and takes advantage of the improved capacity of fixed-wing aviation to provide non-organic fire support.

Peter Wilson, John Gordon IV, and David E. Johnson

## *Legitimate Debate, or Gay Propaganda?*

### **To the Editor:**

In an interview provided by a gay activist group, the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN), Aaron Belkin said he was surprised when *Parameters* elected to publish his article “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell: Is the Gay Ban Based on Military Necessity?” (Summer 2003).<sup>1</sup> I was surprised too—surprised that the Army War College’s respected journal would serve as a platform for a homosexual activist group spreading pure propaganda poorly disguised as legitimate research.

In his article, Belkin argued that our government and military should “have the integrity to admit that current American policy is based on prejudice, not on military necessity.”<sup>2</sup> As proof, he cited several studies conducted by an organization he leads, the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military (CSSMM). I hadn’t heard of it, so I looked it up (I wonder if *Parameters* did). At its website, one recognizes that CSSMM is a political action group, not an independent research organization.<sup>3</sup> In the *Gay People’s Chronicle*, Belkin explains that CSSMM was founded in 1998 to combat claims that support the US ban on gays in the military and “for the purpose of defeating the Colin Powells of the world the next time the issue is brought before Congress.”<sup>4</sup> Do Belkin’s statements suggest his research will be unbiased?

Belkin states that in case studies on homosexual military integration in Australia, Canada, Israel, and Britain, his organization interviewed “every identifiable pro-gay and anti-gay expert . . . in each country. . . including officers and enlisted personnel, ministry representatives, academics, veterans, politicians, and nongovernmental observers.” Surprisingly, according to his “research,” only 104 “experts” exist in these four countries and various fields. Even more surprising, apparently none of these experts, including the anti-gay ones, had an opinion in support of the gay ban worthy to be included in his “findings.”<sup>5</sup>

One of Belkin’s key arguments is that Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell (DADT) is based on anecdotes and misleading surveys instead of quantitative evidence. Belkin explained in other interviews: “There are two forms of data that Moskos [Professor Charles Moskos, author of DADT] and the right wing use to lie to Congress. One is that they use anecdotes, not evidence. Anecdotes can be used to show whatever you want as long as you pick the right anecdotes. . . . [And] they use statistical surveys of straight soldiers showing that they have a dislike of gay soldiers, which they translate into unit cohesion falling apart.”<sup>6</sup> . . . “The generals lied to Congress in 1993 about unit cohesion.”<sup>7</sup>

Yet Belkin’s article is entirely anecdotal. It is nothing more than selected quotes from supposed experts who claim that homosexual integration has had no impact on unit cohesion or military readiness. A quick review of the author’s endnotes, cross-checked with an internet search, reveals the questionable credentials and political leanings of most of these experts. At one point, Belkin refers to a 1995 Canadian government report which supposedly indicates that lifting the

ban on gays in the military had “no effect.” However, his endnote does not cite the report but a “personal communication with Karol Wenek.”<sup>8</sup>

While Belkin condemns statistical surveys presented to Congress to support DADT, he has no problem arguing his case with a survey that he administered with a colleague to 194 combat soldiers.<sup>9</sup> Belkin also claims that his political action group reviewed 622 documents and articles which “revealed no evidence that the lifting of the gay bans undermined military performance, led to difficulties in recruiting or retention, or increased the rate of HIV infection.”<sup>10</sup> However, he fails to identify any of these documents and offers no specific data to back his claim. The data concerning HIV would be especially interesting considering that Britain did not lift its ban until 2000 and, unlike the United States, does not positively screen for HIV annually.

Belkin fails to offer any genuine evidence or quantitative data to support his claims because the data clearly support the military’s position that lifting the ban on homosexuality would significantly detract from combat readiness. Regardless of how one feels about the associated moral issues, the fact is that homosexuality involves an unhealthy, high-risk lifestyle that would potentially overwhelm the military’s limited healthcare system.

According to an Army survey, 80 percent of soldiers who tested positive for HIV admitted to contracting the virus through homosexual contact, and the actual percentage may be higher.<sup>11</sup> According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), homosexual men are a thousand times more likely to contract AIDS than the general male heterosexual population.<sup>12</sup> The carrier rate of hepatitis B among homosexuals is 20 to 50 times that of the general public.<sup>13</sup> The *New England Journal of Medicine* reported that risk of anal cancer rises by an astounding 4,000 percent for those engaging in homosexual intercourse and doubles again for those who are HIV positive. An estimated 30 percent of all 20-year-old homosexual men will be HIV positive or dead by the age of 30.<sup>14</sup> Evidence also shows that the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases within the homosexual community is growing. The CDC says cases of HIV among gay and bisexual men have risen nearly 18 percent over the last three years.<sup>15</sup> Clearly, it is not in the best interest of the military to end its ban on homosexuality.

Belkin, his organization, and others like it are not really interested in a genuine study on the impact of homosexuality within the military, they are engaged in an intense information campaign to market, normalize, and legitimize the homosexual political agenda. This strategy, commonly referred to as “conversion,” involves flooding the marketplace of ideas with carefully crafted rhetoric to shape what society thinks. *Parameters* has helped Belkin legitimize his propaganda. According to the SLDN, Belkin touts that “he hasn’t gotten any negative reaction to his piece in the journal, which goes out to about 13,000 senior military leaders and political leaders, and that he has received positive letters from gay officers who were cheered by the result of his work.”<sup>16</sup> The implication is that his arguments have proven irrefutable by military leaders.

According to SLDN, gay activists chose 2003 “to start a campaign against DADT.”<sup>17</sup> They realize that future decisions concerning gays in the military will

be based on politics and emotion rather than facts. The 1974 decision of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) to remove homosexuality as a pathological psychiatric condition from the Diagnostic Statistical Manual was not based on new scientific findings but was the result of gay activism. As stated by gay-activist researcher Simon Levay, "Gay activism was clearly the force that propelled the APA to declassify homosexuality."<sup>18</sup>

It was political action, not military necessity, which led to Don't Ask, Don't Tell in 1993 when President Clinton fulfilled his campaign promise to the homosexual lobby, which had contributed more than \$3 million to his campaign.<sup>19</sup> As Belkin points out in his article, Australia, Canada, Israel, and Britain lifted their gay bans, despite opposition from their military services, due to political action.<sup>20</sup> Today, many religious organizations are reversing their historic positions on homosexuality not due to divine revelation but rather due to gay activism. It's a battle for ideas, and while Belkin's CSSMM offers \$350 grants to faculty who are willing to promote the homosexual agenda in their syllabi,<sup>21</sup> *Parameters* is willing to do it for free. Disappointing.

#### NOTES

1. Leah Etling, "Don't Ask Don't Tell: Attitudes Shifting on Gays in the Military," *Santa Barbara News-Press*, 19 July 2003; The Servicemembers Legal Defense Fund, Press Room, <http://www.sldn.org/templates/press/record.html?record=1034>.
2. Aaron Belkin, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell: Is the Gay Ban Based on Military Necessity?" *Parameters*, 33 (Summer 2003), 118.
3. Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military (CSSMM), <http://www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu>.
4. Eric Resnick, "Israeli Military Not Affected By Open Policy, Study Says," 7 July 2000, *Gay People's Chronicle – Lead News Stories*, <http://www.gaypeopleschronicle.com/stories/00jul7.htm>.
5. Belkin, pp. 109-10.
6. Etling.
7. Resnick.
8. Belkin, pp. 111, 118.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
11. D. J. Pollock, "US Department of Defense Policy on Homosexuality in the Armed Forces: Military Necessity or Unfair Discrimination?" MMS thesis (Quantico, Va.: Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 1993).
12. US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control, National Center for Infectious Diseases, Division of HIV/AIDS, *The HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report*, December 2001.
13. Barney R. Barendse, "Health Risk of Homosexual Lifestyle in the Military," MMS thesis (Quantico, Va.: Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 1993).
14. Focus on the Family, CitizenLink, "Straight Answers: Exposing the Myths and Facts about Homosexuality," <http://www.family.org/cforum/fosi/homosexuality/maf/a0028248.cfm>.
15. Ed Vitaglian, "Sexual Suicide," *American Family Association Journal*, September 2003.
16. Etling.
17. *Ibid.*
18. A. Dean Byrd, et al., "The Innate-Immutable Argument Finds No Basis in Science," National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuals (NARTH), <http://www.narth.com/docs/innate.html>.
19. Steven C. Shultis, "The Corps and the Homosexual: A Time for Campaigning and Moral Courage," MMS thesis (Quantico, Va.: Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 1993).
20. Belkin, p. 109.
21. See the CSSMM website "Fellowship" link.

Major Joseph A. Craft, USMC  
Quantico, Virginia

### **The Author Replies:**

Major Craft frames my research as propaganda and implies that anyone who agrees with me is being manipulated by the gay lobby. Even if this were true, Craft does not show that lifting the gay ban would undermine readiness. And, when one realizes that Craft's accusations about my scholarship are, at best, without merit, his failure to engage in honest debate becomes even more apparent. To save space, the editors asked me not to use footnotes, but I have posted documentation for this reply at [www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu](http://www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu).

Craft asserts that "lifting the ban on homosexuality would significantly detract from combat readiness." But why, if allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly undermines readiness, hasn't anyone been able to identify a single military whose effectiveness deteriorated after the elimination of a ban? To the contrary, US officials praise the performance of Britain and other coalition partners. Scholars at RAND and PERSEREC (the Personnel Security Research and Evaluation Center) have concluded that eliminating the ban would not undermine readiness. Admiral John Hutson, former Navy JAG, says that the ban is a failed policy that undermines the military, and General Wesley Clark, USA Ret., says the ban does not work. During the first Gulf War, the ban was suspended via a stop-loss order without any apparent impact on readiness. Military leaders know that gays don't undermine readiness, or they would never suspend the ban during war.

Major Craft claims that because gay service members are likely to contract HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), lifting the ban would "overwhelm the military's limited health care system." But many thousands of gays already serve without overwhelming the system, and lifting the ban will not increase their numbers significantly. Currently, approximately 1,000 service members are HIV-positive (.07 percent of the force) and all personnel are screened for HIV prior to accession and frequently thereafter. There is no evidence that the health care systems of any of the 24 foreign militaries that have lifted their bans have been overwhelmed or that rates of HIV or other STDs increased as a result of integration.

According to Craft, gays live "unhealthy, high-risk" lifestyles. But DOD reports that 41.8 percent of service members engage in binge drinking, 17.9 percent ride motorcycles without wearing a helmet, and 57.9 percent of those who are unmarried and sexually active did not use condoms during their last sexual encounter, a troubling finding given our history in places like Olongapo. Sound public policy would address risky behavior as a service-wide problem rather than singling out gays.

While Major Craft invents imagined costs he asserts would result from lifting the ban, even though no organizations that lifted bans experienced such problems, he ignores actual costs the Pentagon must pay to sustain Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT). These include wasted money and talent and embarrassing media coverage that sometimes puzzles the American public, 79 percent of which believes that gays should be allowed to serve openly according to a December 2003 Gallup poll.

As to Craft's charges that my methodology and evidence are flawed, respected, mainstream social scientists see things differently; my work on gays in the

military appears in highly regarded, peer-review journals such as *International Security* and *Armed Forces and Society*, which are neither liberal nor pro-gay, and which do not publish research based on flimsy methodology or data.

Craft questions a passage in which I wrote, “A 1995 internal report from the Canadian government on the lifting of the ban concluded, ‘Despite all the anxiety that existed through the late 80s into the early 90s about the change in policy, here’s what the indicators show—no effect.’” The supporting footnote cites a “Personal communication with Karol Wenek, Directorate of Policy Analysis and Development, Canadian Forces, 20 January 2000.” I cited Wenek rather than the document (“Briefing Note for Director of Public Policy,” Ottawa, Canadian Forces, 25 August 1995), because the *Parameters* quote was Wenek’s description of the report’s conclusion.

My research for the *Parameters* article consisted of extensive literature reviews and interviews of officers and enlisted personnel, ministry representatives, academics, veterans, politicians, and nongovernmental observers (the latter group included activists). Craft questions my decision to interview activists, but consider how vigilantly women’s groups monitor the US military for trouble. My colleagues and I included activists among our interviewees because they are among the most likely to know whether integration caused problems in their countries.

Major Craft finds it “surprising [that] apparently none of the experts, including the anti-gay ones, had an opinion in support of the gay ban worthy to be included in [my] findings.” But none reported that readiness suffered as a result of integration. Consider, for example, Professor Christopher Dandeker, former Chair of War Studies at Kings College London and perhaps the most distinguished scholar of the British military. In 1999, Dandeker wrote that if Britain lifted its ban, readiness would deteriorate. After British policy changed, Dandeker concluded that his prediction had been incorrect.

Craft claims I did not interview all possible experts, and says my article “fails to identify any . . . documents and offers no specific data.” But *Parameters* does not allow authors to publish complete bibliographies. I invite anyone interested in my source lists to consult the extensive reference sections of studies listed in endnote 6 of the article. As those studies explain in detail, my colleagues and I used standard social scientific practices to ensure that our search for documents and experts was thorough.

Finally, Craft mischaracterizes my position on anecdotes and statistics. Anecdotes are useful when they illustrate trends. But even a large number of anecdotes featuring red-haired soldiers who undermine readiness would not demonstrate that red-haired soldiers undermine readiness *on average*. The dishonesty of the 1993 congressional hearings was not the inclusion of anecdotes about gay service members who undermined readiness, but the failure to determine whether those anecdotes represented overall trends. By contrast, when the totality of experts on a particular military testifies that there is no indication that lifting a ban undermined readiness, that is not anecdotal evidence.

I would welcome the opportunity to analyze the unit cohesion rationale statistically, and I requested permission to conduct such a study. The Pentagon

declined to cooperate, and its refusal, which I'll share with interested readers, is fascinating. My complaint about surveys used to justify DADT is not that they are statistical, but that heterosexual dislike of gays is not evidence that lifting the ban would undermine readiness. For example, 66 percent of male British service members said they would not serve with gays if Britain's ban was lifted, but ultimately the policy transition proved unproblematic.

What about personal and political bias? Perhaps the most important distinction between honest scholarship and propaganda turns on a commitment to report embarrassing findings, to avoid reaching conclusions prior to examining the evidence, and to change one's mind when data contradict original expectations. My institute's staff and I always report findings that do not confirm our expectations or beliefs (see, for example, the third case of "Multinational Military Units" at [www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu](http://www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu)), which is why Charles Moskos, architect of DADT, wrote in an email that my scholarship is "reflective of integrity and honesty." When I asked Moskos for permission to use the quote in this essay, he responded, "Aaron, absolutely. Moreover, I have mentioned to many others that your reporting facts not supportive of your position is more remarkable and rare."

While my passion for research derives in part from a desire to hold experts who fail to tell the truth accountable, my research conclusions follow from evidence, not from personal beliefs. If Craft or others can identify foreign militaries whose effectiveness deteriorated or whose health care systems were overwhelmed as a result of eliminating a ban, I will modify my views accordingly. (My institute will entertain fellowship applications for this research, as always, in good faith.)

The difference between Major Craft and me is not that one of us is political while the other is devoted to fact, but that I examine all available data to determine whether the costs of the ban outweigh its benefits, and remain open to changing my views if the evidence warrants, while Craft actively seeks data, sometimes from dubious sources, and ignores other evidence, to justify his predetermined position. As I argued in my *Parameters* article, the gay ban is based on prejudice, not concerns about readiness, and prejudice tends to defy reasoned deliberation.

Aaron Belkin

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### ***Commentary & Reply Submissions***

We invite reader commentaries of up to 1,000 words on articles appearing in *Parameters*. Not all commentaries can be published. For those that are, the author of the article will be invited to provide a reply. Commentaries may be edited to meet style and space constraints. Send to US Army War College, ATTN: *Parameters*, 122 Forbes Ave., Carlisle, PA 17013, or by e-mail to [Parameters@carlisle.army.mil](mailto:Parameters@carlisle.army.mil).

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