

STATEMENT BY

GENERAL GEORGE W. CASEY, JR.
CHIEF OF STAFF
UNITED STATES ARMY

BEFORE THE

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

SECOND SESSION, 111TH CONGRESS

ON THE REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE WORKING
GROUP THAT CONDUCTED A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE
ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH A REPEAL OF
SECTION 654 OF TITLE 10, UNITED STATES CODE,
"POLICY CONCERNING HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE ARMED FORCES."

DECEMBER 3, 2010

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

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Thank you Mr Chairman, Senator McCain, and Members of the Committee.

I have reviewed the final version of the Working Group report on the issues associated with the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell", and want to provide my informed military advice to the committee.

I'll begin by relating how I see the risks from a military perspective and then give you my views of the impact on our force if repeal is directed.

First, I think it's important that we are clear about the military risks. Implementation of the repeal of DADT would be a major cultural and policy change in the middle of a war. It would be implemented by a force and leaders that are already stretched by the cumulative impacts of almost a decade at war. It would be implemented by a force in which a substantial number of soldiers perceive that repeal will have a negative impact on unit effectiveness, cohesion and morale, and that implementation will be difficult. Further, the report clearly indicates that over 40% of our combat arms soldiers believe that the presence of a gay service member in their unit would have a negative impact on the unit's effectiveness, on the trust soldiers feel for each other and on their morale.

As such, I believe that implementation of the repeal of DADT in the near term will: 1) add another level of stress to an already stretched force; 2) be more difficult in combat arms units; and 3) be more difficult for the Army than the report suggests.

That said, if repeal is directed, the implementation principles in the report constitute a solid basis upon which to develop implementation plans that will help mitigate the risks I just described. Properly implemented, I do not envision that it would keep us from accomplishing our world-wide missions--including combat operations. We have a disciplined force and seasoned leaders, who, with appropriate guidance and direction, can oversee the implementation of the repeal with moderate risk to our military effectiveness in the short term, and moderate risk to our ability to recruit and retain our all-volunteer force over time. I do believe that we will have to closely monitor the impact on our mid-level officers and non-commissioned officers as they wrestle with implementing repeal simultaneously with the other challenges facing them after nine years at war. However, it is my judgment we could implement repeal with moderate risk to our military effectiveness and long-term health of the force.

Let me close by saying that if DADT is repealed, the Army will work with the department and the other services to finalize implementation plans, and implement the repeal in the same disciplined manner that we have executed our country's missions for the last 235 years.