

'DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL'

# Study: Overturning ban won't hurt troops

By Anne Flaherty  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon's study on gays in the military has determined that overturning the "don't ask, don't tell" ban on serving openly might cause some disruption at first but would not create widespread or long-lasting problems.

The study provides ammunition to congressional Democrats struggling to overturn the law. But even with the release of Tuesday's report, there is no indication they can overcome fierce Republican objections with just a few weeks left in this year's post-election congressional session.

Still, Defense Secretary Robert Gates and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Mike Mullen, said Congress should act quickly because of a recent effort by a federal judge to overturn the law.

Gates said the military needs time to prepare for such an adjustment, even though he said he didn't envision any changes to housing or other personnel policies. He said a sudden, court-issued mandate would significantly increase the risk of disruption.

"Given the present circumstances, those that choose not to act legislatively are rolling the

dice that this policy will not be abruptly overturned by the courts," Gates told reporters.

The co-chairs of the study, Pentagon General Counsel Jeh Johnson and Army Gen. Carter Ham, wrote, "We are both convinced that our military can do this, even during this time of war."

Overall, the survey found that some two-thirds of troops don't care if the ban is lifted. Of the 30 percent who objected, most were members of combat units.

In fact, at least 40 percent of combat troops said the acceptance of gays serving openly would be a bad idea. That number climbs to 58 percent among Marines serving in combat roles.

A summary of the report says 69 percent of respondents believe they have already served alongside a gay person. Of those who believed that, 92 percent said their units were able to work together and 8 percent said the units functioned poorly as a result.

"We have a gay guy. He's big, he's mean and he kills lots of bad guys. No one cared that he was gay," the report quotes a member of the special operations force as saying.

The report predicts that many gay troops would still keep their sexual orientation quiet even



Manuel Balce Ceneta/Associated Press

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen, right, with Defense Secretary Robert Gates, hidden at left, testifies on Capitol Hill before a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

after the ban was lifted. That discretion would probably be more common in the military than in the civilian world, the reports authors said.

Of the survey respondents who said they were gay, only 15 percent said they would want that known to everyone in their unit.

The summary included anonymous quotes from gay troops currently serving.

"I will just be me," one person said. "I will bring my family to family events. I will put family pictures on my desk. I am not going to go up to people and say, 'Hi there. I'm gay.'"

Gates said he didn't think the Pentagon would have to rewrite its regulations on housing, benefits or fraternization.

"Existing policies can and should be applied equally to homosexuals as well as hetero-

sexuals," he said, adding that the change could be addressed through increased training and education.

Though some troops suggested during the study that there should be separate bath and living facilities for gays, the report recommended against it because it would be a "logistical nightmare, expensive and impossible to administer."

Further, separate facilities would stigmatize gays and lesbians in the way that "separate but equal" facilities did to blacks before the 1960s, it said. The House has already voted to overturn the law as part of a broader defense policy bill.

But Senate Republicans have blocked the measure because they say not enough time has been allowed for debate on unrelated provisions in the bill.

# Obama, GOP discuss tax cuts

By David Espo  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Heralding a new era of divided government, President Barack Obama and congressional Republicans pledged warily to seek common ground on tax cuts and reduced spending Tuesday in their first meeting since tumultuous midterm elections.

Obama also made a strong plea to Senate Republicans to permit ratification of a new arms control treaty with Russia by year's end, raising the issue first in a session in the White House's Roosevelt Room and then in a follow-up meeting without aides present, officials said.

No substantive agreements on essential year-end legislation emerged from the session, and none had been expected. Instead, the meeting was a classic capital blend of substance and style, offering a chance for Obama, House Speaker-in-waiting John Boehner and Senate GOP leader Mitch McConnell to become more comfortable in one another's presence.

"The American people did not vote for gridlock. They didn't vote for unyielding partisanship. They're demanding cooperation and they're demanding progress," the president told reporters, referring to elections that gave the GOP control of the House and a stronger say in the Senate.

Back at the Capitol after the meeting, Boehner said, "I think that spending more time will help us find some common ground," and he credited Obama with opening the session by saying he had not reached out enough in the past to Republican leaders.

Even so, there was little or no attempt to minimize the differences that divided the parties during the election campaign, including a disagreement on legislation to extend Bush-era tax cuts due to expire at year's end.

# Stocks fall as euro concerns continue

By Chip Cutter  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Stocks ended November on a down note Tuesday, notching their first monthly losses since August.

The Dow Jones industrial average lost 46 points. It had been down as many as 110 points earlier in the day. The index pared most of its losses after President Barack Obama and Republican lawmakers promised to seek a compromise before the end of the year on extending Bush-era tax cuts.

Extending the cuts would motivate investors to hold stocks since they wouldn't be subject to higher capital gains taxes next year. It

would also encourage companies to continue paying dividends, which are taxed at a more favorable rate.

The Dow ended November with a loss of 1 percent. It had rallied through September and October on hopes that a bond-buying program by the Federal Reserve would boost the economy.

The Dow reached its highest point of the year on Nov. 5, two days after the Fed announced its \$600 billion economic stimulus plan. Stocks have fallen since then on worries about Europe's debt troubles. Ireland on Sunday became the second European country after Greece to require a bailout this year.

The euro briefly fell below \$1.30

for the first time since mid-September after investors sold off government bonds from Spain, Portugal and Italy. The bailout of Ireland's banks hasn't been enough to assuage worries that other weak European countries will also need to be rescued.

John Briggs, a fixed income analyst at RBS, said the concerns about weak members of the euro zone are spreading faster than governments can react.

"It's becoming more of a system-wide issue and the currency decline continues to accelerate day after day," he said. "Until we get some kind of systemic response, it's likely to continue."

The Dow Jones industrial aver-

age fell 46.47, or 0.4 percent, to close at 11,006.02.

The Standard & Poor's 500 index fell 7.21, or 0.6 percent, to 1,180.55. The Nasdaq composite index dropped 26.99, or 1.1 percent, to 2,498.23.

The S&P 500 fell 0.2 percent in November; the Nasdaq 0.4 percent.

Economic reports Tuesday did not present a clear picture of where the economy was headed. The Standard & Poor's S&P/Case-Shiller index showed that home prices are falling faster in the nation's largest cities. However, the Conference Board said its index of consumer confidence jumped to a five-month high in November.

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