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'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' Repeal Certified by President Obama

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, July 22, 2011 – Based on recommendations from military leaders, President Barack Obama has certified to Congress that the U.S. armed forces are prepared for repeal of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" law.

There is a 60-day waiting period before the repeal goes into effect, so the law will officially come off the books Sept. 20. After that date, gay service members can be open about their sexual orientation.

The president signed the certification and delivered it to Congress today.

Congress passed the repeal law in December. The legislation gave the military time to prepare the force and said repeal would happen only after the president, the defense secretary and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff certified the force as ready for repeal.

The Defense Department chartered a repeal implementation team to coordinate the necessary changes to policy and regulations, and to provide education and training to service members. The team worked to ensure the smoothest possible transition for the U.S. military to accommodate and implement this important and necessary change, Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta said.

"Today, as a result of strong leadership and proactive education throughout the force, we can take the next step in this process," the secretary said. "The president, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and I have certified that the implementation of repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell is consistent with the standards of military readiness, military effectiveness, unit cohesion and recruiting and retention of the armed forces."

Panetta said he believes the repeal is essential to the effectiveness of our all-volunteer force. "All men and women who serve this nation in uniform – no matter their race, color, creed, religion or sexual orientation – do so with great dignity, bravery, and dedication," he said in a written statement on certification.

Panetta pledged to support a military free from personal, social or institutional barriers that prevent service members from rising to the highest level of responsibility that their talents and capabilities warrant.

"They put their lives on the line for America, and that's what really matters," he said. "Thanks to the professionalism and leadership of the U.S. military, we are closer to achieving the goal that is at the foundation of America — equality and dignity for all."

The services put together training courses for the force and more than 1.9 million service members have now received that training. DOD and service officials also looked at regulatory and legal changes that repeal entailed.

"I am comfortable that we have used the findings of the Comprehensive Review Working Group to mitigate areas of concern, and that we have developed the policy and regulations necessary for implementation – consistent with standards of military readiness, military effectiveness, unit cohesion and recruiting and retention," Navy Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in a written statement.

Certification is not the end of the road. The department, the services and the combatant commands must work "to train the remainder of the joint force, to monitor our performance as we do so, and to adjust policy where and when needed," Mullen said.

The "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" law went into effect in 1993. It allowed gay and lesbian personnel to serve in the military as long as they were not open about their sexual orientation.

On Feb. 2, 2010, Mullen testified to that Senate Armed Services Committee that he believed it was time to repeal the law.

"It is my personal belief that allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly would be the right thing to do," Mullen told the senators. "No matter how I look at the issue, I cannot escape being troubled by the fact that we have in place a policy which forces young men and women to lie about who they are in order to defend their fellow citizens. For me, personally, it comes down to integrity – theirs as individuals and ours as an institution."

Mullen said he believes soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines can handle the changes.

"My confidence in our ability to accomplish this work rests primarily on the fact that our people are capable, well-led and thoroughly professional," he said in his written statement today. "I have never served with finer men and women. They will, I am certain, carry out repeal and continue to serve this country with the same high standards and dignity that have defined the U.S. military throughout our history."

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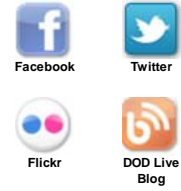
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7/25/2011 12:38:12 PM
DoD files 17 people were discharged under DADT (November 1993 - July 2011). • 78,000 bisexuals, lesbians, and gays are serving in the U.S. military today. • Millions served successfully through the 20th and 21st centuries. • 41 other nations refuse to allow open military service, regardless of sexual orientation.
- Ned_Flaherty, Boston, MA

7/22/2011 5:04:06 PM
FYI - http://OutMilitary.com is providing a supportive place for gay servicemen and women to friend, share and network in a post DADT era.
- John McKinnon, Boston

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