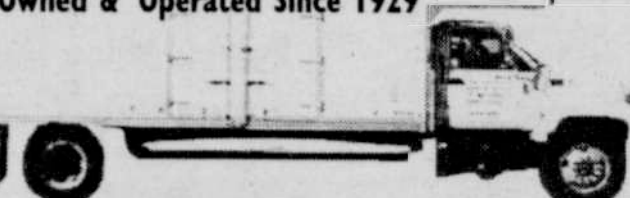


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NATIONAL news



PHOTO BY ROBERT BURKE

Nadine Smith speaks out against hate along with (from left) activist Roy Kaplan and victims Sonny Gonzales, Stephen Hair and Scott Boswell on July 13 in Tampa, Fla.

ly specialized agents conducting logistical, training and intelligence support in Afghanistan are not uniformed soldiers. The most highly publicized of these was Johnny Michael Spann, a 32-year-old CIA officer who became the first U.S. casualty since the bombing campaign began last fall. The *New York Times* reported this month that "never before have the traditionally independent military and law enforcement organizations worked so much in concert."

A "broad coalition" of conservative, religious, libertarian and other organizations that invited Gays and Lesbians for Individual Liberty to participate in its

FLORIDA

A group of young men leaving a Tampa Pride event were taunted and physically attacked in a hate-motivated crime July 6.

According to the *St. Petersburg Times*, 34-year-old Sonny Gonzales had a head laceration, while his partner, 25-year-old Stephen Hair, suffered a skull fracture, a cracked sinus and a broken tooth trying to defend him. Scott Boswell, 24, got a split lip.

Authorities have charged Devin Scott Angus, 20, with aggravated battery with great bodily harm and battery evidencing prejudice. Sheriff's deputies still are looking for a second man.

In response to the gay-bashing, Equality Florida organized a Rally Against Hate Violence on July 13. Director Nadine Smith said the best way for people to express their outrage at the assault is to refuse to be intimidated.

"We must publicly take a stand and send a clear message that hate violence has no place in our community," she said. "We must not be silent when any group in our community is targeted for attack."

NATIONAL

With the continued prosecution of the U.S. war against terrorism, the presence of non-uniformed intelligence agents in combat situations is raising new questions about the rationale for the military's ban on openly gay soldiers.

In interviews conducted recently by the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military at the University of California, Santa Barbara, experts said the conflict has placed intelligence officers—who are not governed by the Pentagon's "don't ask, don't tell" policy—in paramilitary environments. Some analysts consequently have begun to ask why, if intelligence combatants are not fired for revealing their homosexuality, gay soldiers still are drummed out if their sexual orientation becomes known.

"We have our policy; you'll need to talk to [the intelligence agencies] about theirs," said Lt. Col. James Cassella, a Pentagon spokesman. He added that although "a servicemember's sexual orientation is a personal and private matter," the 1993 federal statute barring openly gay men and women from serving in the armed forces "determined that homosexual conduct is incompatible with military service."

Although uniformed personnel always have served in intelligence agencies, many of the high-

efforts now has removed the advocacy group because most of its members are queer.

The ad hoc coalition, led by the Washington, D.C.-based Free Congress Foundation, circulated a draft letter June 10 addressed to U.S. Rep. F. James Sensenbrenner Jr., House Judiciary Committee chairman, which included GLIL's name. After some of its members objected—primarily religious-right organizations and individuals—the group's signature was excised.

"Their base may be 'broad,' but their minds appear to be narrow," GLIL president Richard Sincere said. Foundation vice president "Lisa Dean told me that there was no policy disagreement involved. She made it clear that GLIL's name was removed solely because our members are gay and lesbian."

Sincere has been an outspoken opponent of hate crimes legislation and an active supporter of



Richard Sincere

the Boy Scouts of America's right to exclude gay troop leaders. He pointed out that the coalition included such disparate groups as the American Civil Liberties Union and Gun Owners of America.

The letter to Sensenbrenner expressed concerns that new FBI guidelines issued by Attorney General John Ashcroft "will usher in an invigorated campaign against lawful dissent and religious expression.... The First and Fourth Amendments and the system of checks and balances established in our Constitution should not be undermined under the guise of mendacious explanations for failure."

Sincere fumed: "From a freedom of association standpoint, the Free Congress Foundation may exclude us from participating in their coalition. But when they do so for petty and childish reasons, they have no right to escape embarrassment and public scrutiny."

A clear majority of U.S. adults surveyed last month support basic partnership rights for same-sex couples, including joint property rights, estate inheritance laws, emergency health care authority and hospital visitation rights, according to a new national study. A plurality of individuals (48 percent) also support Social Security survivor benefits for same-sex couples, with 34 percent opposed and 18 percent undecided.

The survey of 2,050 people was conducted online between June 20 and 26 by Harris Inter-