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**WORLD news**



U.S. soldiers force Iraqis to simulate gay sex inside the Abu Ghraib prison

**IRAQ**

Photos of U.S. forces abusing prisoners of war at an Iraqi prison, published May 6 to 8 in *The Washington Post* and elsewhere, contain homophobic or homoerotic elements.

Naked male prisoners are shown being led on leashes, shackled to bars, shackled to beds, tied up together front-to-back and piled on top of one another. A photo published May 8 at MSNBC.com shows a naked, hooded male prisoner shoving his penis into the face of a naked, kneeling, hooded male prisoner and holding the man's head tight against his groin.

U.S. soldiers also reportedly saw male prisoners forced to kneel naked in front of other naked male prisoners as well as a male prisoner standing and masturbating over the open mouth of a kneeling male detainee. President Bush said May 5 that the photos made him sick to his stomach and that "the wrongdoers will be brought to justice."

"The photos of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib prison are deplorable and show clear contempt for human dignity," said Steve Ralls of Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, a military watchdog organization. "Several of the prisoners are placed in poses in a specific attempt to emasculate prisoners through the depiction of same-sex acts. It is disturbing that American soldiers believe sexual orientation to be an effective tool of humiliation."

**UNITED KINGDOM**

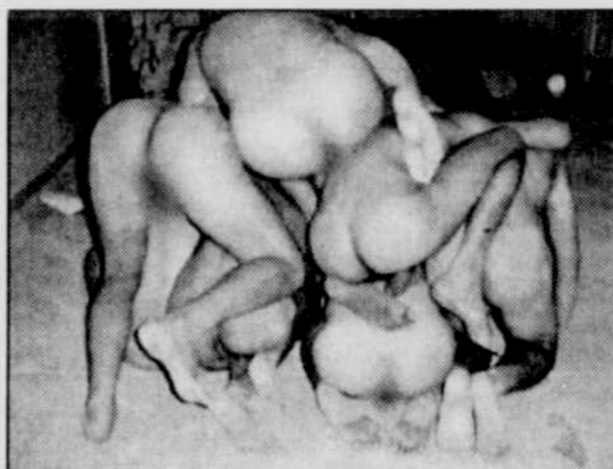
Britain's new Sexual Offenses Act, which took effect May 1, treats gays and straights the same when it comes to sex crimes, for the first time. Two offenses that applied only to men who have sex with men—buggery and gross indecency—no longer exist.

Men who had to register as sex offenders for having sex with teen-age males 16 and older before the age of consent was equalized can apply to be removed from the registry. Male group sex is no longer illegal.

A new measure criminalizes gay or straight sex that takes place in public toilets, but it is only a "nuisance" crime. Violators will not have to register as sex offenders.

"For years, outdated attitudes enshrined in law have fostered mistrust and made generations of gay men criminals," Home Office minister Paul Goggins told London's *The Pink Paper*. "The government has ended this unjust situation."

Conservative activists in the Church of England have demanded a meeting with British Prime Minister Tony Blair to protest the appointment of gay canon Jeffrey John as dean



of St. Albans Cathedral, *The Guardian* reported April 24.

Last year, John, who lives celibately with his lover, was appointed bishop of Reading by the bishop of Oxford, but he was later forced by Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, head of the Church of England, to turn down the job after a prolonged outcry from Anglican evangelicals.

Following the new appointment, the conservatives, calling themselves Anglican Mainstream, accused Blair of moving the church "in a more liberal direction." They have urged their supporters to complain to Queen Elizabeth II, Blair, Williams, the bishop of St. Albans and the media.

St. Albans is about 20 miles northwest of London.

Britain's Radio Academy named gay singer George Michael radio's most-played artist during the past 20 years and handed him an award April 28.

"I can't believe it. I've only made six albums in 22 years, so I don't know how this happened," Michael said. "I'm the luckiest writer on earth."

Researchers surveyed more than 600 radio stations nationwide to reach their determination. Elton John took second place, followed by Robbie Williams, Kylie Minogue, Bryan Adams, Madonna, Phil Collins, Cliff Richard, Mick Hucknall and Paul McCartney.

**NEW ZEALAND**

New Zealanders are divided on the notion of creating civil unions to extend marriage rights to same-sex couples.

According to the New Zealand Press Association, a One News-Colmar Brunton poll of 1,000 people found that 46 percent of respondents support the Civil Union Bill, 34 percent oppose it, and 16 percent think it should apply only to straight couples. The bill is expected to be introduced into Parliament in a few weeks.

Two male king penguins at the Kelly Tarlton aquarium in Auckland have been lovers for 10 years, *The New Zealand Herald* reported April 22. Julio and Fabio have been together since they arrived from San Diego in 1994—and they are monogamous, despite king penguins' penchant for sleeping around.

They never so much as flirt with female penguins. "They have eyes only for each other," bird curator Rochelle Deane said.

Julio and Fabio swim and play together. They trumpet and bow and regurgitate food for each other, like any penguin couple, the report said. "They don't actually bonk," Deane told the paper. "But they're totally out there."

**POLAND**

Online hackers stole the membership list of leading Polish gay organization Campaign Against Homophobia, *The Gully* reported April 19.

The list contained names, addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses, which the thieves quickly posted on the Internet, resulting in a barrage of hate mail to members. Some news reports linked the theft to a neo-Nazi skin-head organization, which denied responsibility.

**MEXICO**

A gay former police employee from Puerto Vallarta was turned down for asylum May 3 by Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board because he is too butch. The board said Fernando Enrique Rivera, 30, is not "visibly effeminate" and likely could live unharassed in Mexico City, which it claimed is more gay-friendly than Puerto Vallarta, according to Toronto's *Globe and Mail* newspaper.

"I know some gay refugees who put on lipstick and dressed effeminately for their hearings because they thought it would help their case. But that is not who I am," he told the paper.

Rivera left Mexico four years ago after local cops repeatedly blackmailed him with threats of being outed, he said. He faces deportation unless a final appeal on humanitarian and compassionate grounds succeeds.

**SOUTH AFRICA**

South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province, where Durban is located, is marketing itself to gay tourists, following Cape Town and Western Cape province's successes in that undertaking, *Business Day* reported May 6.

Tourism KwaZulu-Natal unveiled its new Pink Map during the nation's main tourism trade show this month. "In six months the Zulu Kingdom will be an attractive destination to the international gay and lesbian traveler," said Jayne Darkes, a spokeswoman for the new KwaZulu-Natal Gay and Lesbian Tourism Association, which Tourism KwaZulu-Natal helped found.

**GHANA**

Ghana's commissioner for human rights and administrative justice, Anna Bossman, says the government should consider decriminalizing gay sex, GhanaWeb.com reported May 6.

"Engaging in these practices is not currently legal. It may be said that this is a form of discrimination," she said. "Why would you criminalize actions between two consenting adults? The more advanced societies just softened their laws on homosexuality. Our laws are lagging behind."

However, decriminalization would be a hard sell, she predicted. "Most people, religious leaders and even judges will probably say 'no way,'" she said.

The African nation's criminal code states: "Whoever is guilty of unnatural carnal knowledge—(a) of any person without his consent, is guilty of a first-degree felony; or (b) of any person with his consent, or of any animal, is guilty of a misdemeanor."

**NIGERIA**

Nigerian gay rights groups made their "first ever" public appearance during an AIDS conference in Abuja, the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported May 7.

"For most of Nigerians, [men who have sex with men] are not human beings—they simply don't exist," said Oludare Odumuye, president of the 8,000-member gay organization Alliance