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NATIONAL Pentagon Confirms Spying on 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' Foes

The Department of Defense has confirmed it conducted surveillance, on a more extensive level than previously reported, of student groups at universities in California, New Jersey and Connecticut. Some of that surveillance, new documents suggest, might have been part of an undercover Pentagon operation.

The information was released in a June 15 letter to counsel for Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN) in response to a Freedom of Information Act request filed by the organization. The letter and the accompanying reports reveal government surveillance of "don't ask, don't tell" and anti-war protests at State University of New York at Albany, William Paterson University in New Jersey, Southern Connecticut State University and University of California at Berkeley.

"Federal government agencies have no business peeping through the keyholes of Americans who choose to exercise their First Amendment rights," said C. Dixon Osburn, SLDN executive director. "It is patently absurd that this administration has linked sexual orientation with terrorism."

The documents indicate that e-mails sent by various student groups were intercepted and monitored by the government and that the government collected reports from seemingly undercover agents who attended at least one student protest at Southern Connecticut State University. None of the reports in the documentation, however, indicated any terrorist activity by the students who were monitored.

Other agencies have either denied participating in domestic surveillance of the queer community or have refused to release information about their activity. In a June letter to SLDN, the National Security Agency said it will "neither confirm nor deny the existence or non-existence" of information that may have been obtained in its surveillance of the sexual minorities community.

Half of Fortune 500 Now Offer Partner Benefits

A majority of Fortune 500 companies now offer domestic partner health insurance benefits, according to a Human Rights Campaign Foundation report released June 29. About 86 percent of Fortune 500 companies also include sexual orientation in their nondiscrimination policy.

"While protections for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Americans are stalled in Congress, corporate America continues to surge ahead," said

Human Rights Campaign president Joe Solmonese. "By removing barriers to employee success, corporate America is ultimately removing barriers to the success of companies across the nation."

The State of the Workplace is published annually by HRC's Workplace Project. This report is a national source of information on laws and workplace policies surrounding sexual orientation and gender identity.

The report noted that 81 Fortune 500 companies included the terms "gender identity" and/or "gender expression" in their nondiscrimination statements—10 times the number that had such policies in 2001.

Gay-Targeted Marketing Draws Yawns

An overwhelming majority of American adults say knowing that a company markets its products or services to gays and lesbians would have no impact on their purchasing decisions or attitudes about that company, according to a new national survey.

The survey conducted for FH Out Front, the gay and lesbian practice of St. Louis-based PR firm Fleishman-Hillard, also found that a majority of Americans (52 percent) would "do nothing" if an organization launched a boycott against companies that market or promote products and services to gays and lesbians. Although 7 percent of respondents said they would participate in such a boycott, more than double that number, 15 percent, said they would speak out against the boycott.

The overwhelming majority (82 percent) of those surveyed said it does not matter to them if a company whose products they use on a regular basis also promotes them to the gay and lesbian community. Two-thirds of American adults surveyed said that knowing a company promotes its products or services to gays and lesbians has no effect on how they feel about the company.

More than three-fourths of respondents said they personally know someone who is gay or lesbian. The survey found that these people are more likely than others to support companies that market to the sexual minorities community.

Advocacy Group Embraces New Anti-HIV Drug

Project Inform, one of the nation's best-known HIV treatment and health care information and advocacy organizations, announced June 27 its enthusiastic support of the Food and Drug Administration's approval of Prezista, a new anti-HIV drug from Tibotec Therapeutics. Prezista will initially be used in the treatment of people with advanced HIV disease who are resistant to most other therapies.

"Based on the evidence we've seen so far," said Paul Dalton of Project Inform, "this is very likely the most successful drug yet for treating people with high levels of resistance. That makes it a very important step forward."

Prezista has shown high levels of activity in people who are resistant to most other protease inhibitors. Previously, many HIV-infected people eventually became resistant to nearly all medications and ran out of options.

"The new drug opens the door to a future for many people who were otherwise running out of hope," said Delaney.

Later in the year, Tibotec will offer expanded access to a second new therapy to better support the use of Prezista. Additionally, Merck is expected



Longtime activist and author Eric Rofes died June 26 in Provincetown, Mass.