

Abortion protester acquitted

Elizabeth Ann Tilson, a 33-year-old housewife from Wichita, Kan., listens to a reporter's question in Wichita July 21, following her successful appeal of a trespassing conviction stemming from her arrest during an August, 1991, abortion protest. A state-court judge ruled that life begins at conception and freed Tilson, saying she was justified in attempting to blockade an abortion clinic.



AP/Wide World Photos

Harassment cases tarnishing military's image

By Laurie Hansen
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — A lot of women are hoping the U.S. military will never be the same again.

Recurring reports of sexual harassment of women in the Army and Navy by fellow soldiers or officers have tarnished the image of the nation's military forces and raised the ire of President Bush.

High praise the military received for professionalism during Operation Desert Storm now seems a distant memory.

News reports suggest that incidents at the 1991 Tailhook Association, where 26 women were sexually assaulted while being pushed down a gauntlet of drunken naval aviators, may have been the tip of the iceberg.

Since then the Army has admitted that U.S. Army troops stationed in the Persian Gulf committed at least 34 sex crimes, many of them against fellow soldiers, before and during the war with Iraq.

The *Army Times*, which first reported the crimes, said the incidents ranged from an alleged rape aboard a rest-and-relaxation cruise ship in the gulf to a male guard fondling a female comrade.

Then in early July, Kathleen Brooks of Cheyenne, Wyo., who left the Navy in 1970, said she routinely endured a gauntlet of groping, pinching, slapping sailors in 1967 while studying at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center in Chicago.

John Clewis, director of personnel at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, contends that "continuous education" is required to change "long-standing attitudes" toward women in the military.

"It's going to be a long, slow process," said Clewis, whose position entails training university employees how to respond to charges of sex harassment.

"A lot of people in the military believe that part of camaraderie is engaging in locker-room humor," he contends.

Real change in attitudes isn't apt to occur, he told Catholic News Service, until unit commanders around the country "let men and women in their units know this is a serious issue and

learn to value the diversity that women bring to the military," he said.

At Loyola Marymount, Clewis said, sexual harassment charges are met with "a very thorough investigation, which means asking a lot of repetitive questions" of parties involved.

The person bringing the charge is allowed to call a halt to the investigation at any time. He or she is promised that the investigation will be "speedy, confidential and that there will be no retaliation," said Clewis.

At Loyola Marymount, he said, there are annual training sessions for staff on how to respond to reports of sexual harassment.

Supervisors are taught that "every complaint of this nature is a serious complaint," he said.

For the military, Clewis suggests "workshops preferably led by women" to expose members of the military to "the kinds of experiences women in the military are having."

Clewis said a lot of men "hide behind 'old boy' excuses like 'I didn't mean anything by it' or 'I was just having fun.'"

But, according to a number of recent court decisions, he said, "what the perpetrator meant is beside the point." What matters is what the victim experienced, he said.

Roberta Goldberg, assistant professor of sociology at Trinity College in Washington, told CNS that women in the military have chosen a difficult field. Even if they experience harassment, they often don't report it because they "don't want to do anything to ruin their own careers."

"I think many see themselves as test cases and role models" in their profession, she said.

Goldberg contends that the recent scandals have come to light because there has been an effort to move women into full participation in the military.

"That effort is hitting up against the military's male culture" in which, she said, an incident like Tailhook can be easily defended with a "boys-just-being-boys" excuse.

The sociologist contends that a period of confrontation will continue until "women (in the military) are in a position of being models to men."

Removing women from the military is no longer an option, said Goldberg.

She disagrees with the suggestion that the Persian Gulf War incidents show women shouldn't be in the frontlines during war.

"Women want to be in the frontlines not because they love fighting or taking the risks that the men take, but because they want to make it in the military," said Goldberg.

She called it "most reprehensible" that for women in the Gulf War "there was more danger in associating with their comrades than confronting their enemy."

The sociologist called on the military to "examine the conditions under which they train people and promote people, and better define what it means to be a military person rather than a military man."

The Tailhook incidents came to light when one of the victimized, Paula Coughlin, a Navy helicopter pilot, spoke to the press. Since then President Bush has accepted the resignation of Navy Secretary H. Lawrence Garrett III, who cited "leadership failure" in the Tailhook episode.

Coughlin's superior, Rear Adm. Jack Snyder, was relieved of his command after failing to take quick action after she told him she was abused at the convention.

Only two men initially were identified as being implicated in the case despite two Navy investigations and 1,500 interviews of those at the convention.

Later, the Navy said some 70 officers could face disciplinary action.

Interview with Quayle stirs pro-life, pro-choice factions

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Pro-life leaders rallied behind Vice President Dan Quayle after he told a television talk show host that if his daughter became pregnant he would support whatever decision she made.

Pro-choice advocates without restrictions were quick to say Quayle's comments on the *Larry King Live* show broadcast July 22 show him to be a hypocrite who opposes abortion but would respect his own daughter's "freedom to choose."

But Wanda Franz, president of the National Right to Life Committee, said Quayle's remarks were "consistent with his pro-life views, his role as a parent and the reality that abortion is legal."

In the CNN program, Quayle answered a question from King about what he'd do if his daughter, now 13, were pregnant:

Quayle: Well, it is a hypothetical situation. I hope that I never have to deal with it. But obviously...

King: What would you do?

Quayle: I would counsel her and talk to her and support her on whatever decision she made.

King: And if the decision was abortion, you'd support her, as a parent?

Quayle: I'd support my daughter.

I'd hope that she wouldn't make that decision.

Later, Quayle and his wife, Marilyn, said that if their daughter, Corinne, became pregnant now they would insist she carry the pregnancy to term.

Franz said Quayle's "defense of unborn children has been strong and unchanging from his days in Congress through his tenure as vice president."

She said parents understood Quayle's remarks to mean he would love and support his daughter.

"That love and support continues even when children make serious mistakes or even when children commit acts with which their parents disagree," she said.

Kate Michelman, president of the National Abortion Rights Action League, said, "While we welcome Vice President Quayle's newfound respect for his own daughter's freedom to choose, we regret that he and President Bush want to take that same freedom away from everyone else."

The Republican platform due to be adopted at the party's August convention calls for a constitutional amendment to ban abortions. Quayle opposes abortion except in cases of rape, incest or when the life of the mother is in danger.