

the rest of our world

Anti-Gay Slur

WASHINGTON – A bomb being loaded onto a plane headed toward Afghanistan had an anti-gay slur scrawled on it.

A top Navy official says the incident was inappropriate and commanders have been directed to prevent similar incidents.

Pilots or crews of U.S. warplanes often write messages on bombs, either taunting the enemy or praising America. Messages written on bombs during the anti-terrorism airstrikes have included several references to the Sept. 11 attacks.

A news photograph of a plane on the USS Enterprise aircraft carrier last week showed one bomb with the message, "High Jack This, Faggot."

The Human Rights Campaign, a gay rights group, complained about the bomb's message. Rear Adm. Stephen Pietropaoli, in a letter to the group Wednesday, said the Navy does not tolerate discrimination and the bomb's message was an "isolated incident."

Several newspapers across the country also asked the Navy about the bomb's message earlier this week, said Pietropaoli, the Navy's chief of information.

"We immediately notified Navy commanders involved with Operation Enduring Freedom to ensure steps were taken to prevent a recurrence of this unfortunate incident. They have done so," Pietropaoli wrote.

D.C. Partners

WASHINGTON – Gay and lesbian couples who work for the District of Columbia's city government are going to be able to get domestic partnership coverage.

The House agreed to reverse a nine year policy and allow the city of Washington to extend a city employee health care plan to unmarried domestic partners.

By a 226-194 vote the House defeated an amendment to a D.C. spending bill that would have continued the current ban on using both federal and local funds for domestic partnership benefits.

Washington's 1992 law permitting the extension of such benefits has never been implemented because of congressional bans.

The Appropriations Committee recommended against the ban this year, but there was an attempt to reimpose it.

"We are walking away from the traditions and virtues that we have respected and honored since our country was founded," said Rep. Tom DeLay, R-Texas.

"I was deeply shocked," said Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., an openly gay member of Congress, "that the Republican leadership had chosen to use this bill to make an assault on millions of gay and lesbian Americans in general and on those who live in the District of Columbia in particular."

S. African Rights

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa – Some new rights are being extended to same-sex couples in South Africa.

A Pretoria High Court judge ruled in a case involving another member of the court, Anna-Marie de Vos, who sought domestic partner benefits for her partner and the right to adopt a child.

Judge Frans Kgomo said sections of a guardianship act had to be altered to include same-sex life partners.

De Vos had been deemed the sole adoptive parent of two children in 1995, although both she and her partner sought legal custody.

The couple argued that it was in the best interests of the children that their experience of family life be reflected in the law.

In his decision, Kgomo said he had no evidence to show that same-sex life partners are less capable of raising children.

In a second ruling, Kgomo said that sections of a compensation act for judges should be declared unconstitutional because they prevent same-sex partners from sharing benefits enjoyed by their married counterparts.

Altering the act would entitle the partners of gay judges to such benefits as sharing in medical insurance packages and compensation in the case of death.

Partner Benefits

WASHINGTON – More and more U.S. corporations are extending domestic partner benefits to their gay and lesbian employees.

The Human Rights

Campaign says the number of corporations offering such benefits, or planning to, grew 20 percent during the past year to 4,284.

The number of employers offering the benefits has almost doubled in two years, from 2,846 in August 1999.

"We believe employers are bringing their policies into line with the changing makeup of the American family," said Kim I. Mills, editor of the report.

The number of Fortune 500 companies offering domestic partner benefits has more than doubled in the past three years, from 61 in 1998 to 145 in 2001.

Gay Counseling

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Supreme Court has let stand an appeals court ruling that said a Mississippi hospital could fire a counselor for refusing to provide services to a lesbian.

Sandra Bruff, who was a counselor in an employee assistance program, was dismissed by a hospital in 1996, a firing she claimed had to do with her religious objections to homosexuality.

The Supreme Court declined without comment to accept Bruff's appeal.

Initially, a jury ordered North Mississippi Medical Center in Tupelo to pay the counselor \$2 million. Because of federal lawsuit limits, that was reduced to \$300,000.

The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reduced it to nothing, ruling that the firing was justified. The court said the hospital made an effort to accommodate Bruff with another position that would not conflict with her religious beliefs.

"An employee has a duty to cooperate in achieving accommodation of his or her religious beliefs, and must be flexible in achieving that end. Bruff displayed almost no such cooperation or flexibility," the appeals court said.

Gay Hitler?

BERLIN – Could Adolf Hitler have been gay?

Lothar Machtan, author of "The Hidden Hitler," said that long-ignored evidence strongly suggests the Nazi dictator had homosexual tendencies but that he masked his leanings because

they conflicted with his ruthless drive for power.

"You can reduce it to one sentence: Adolf Hitler was attracted to men," said Machtan, 52, a Bremen University professor. "Or, he had homosexual leanings."

Historians have long assumed that Hitler never consummated his relationships with women, including his longtime companion Eva Braun. Previous biographers have raised questions about Hitler's sexual orientation, but no major biography has claimed outright that Hitler was gay.

English historian Alan Bullock, author of "Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives" said that not enough was known about Hitler to make such a statement.

"You can make a case that maybe he was, but it seems highly improbable," Bullock said in a telephone interview. "I'd want more evidence."

Machtan said his key evidence was a letter written in 1948 by Hans Mend to a German diplomat saying that he had seen Hitler lying in the hay with "his male whore" while serving in France during World War I in 1915.

Harassment

NEW YORK – MTV is trying to battle discrimination against gay and lesbian students.

The New York-based Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network joined MTV to release a series of public service ads aimed at countering anti-gay sentiment among teen-agers.

GLSEN said the ad campaign is the largest of its kind on any television network, and will run at least four weeks, possibly longer.

The first spot was timed to coincide with the first airing of "Hate in the Hallways," an episode about anti-gay bullying on MTV's new weekly documentary series, "Criminal."

"MTV is playing a heroic role in helping us speak to young people who are likely to either experience or perpetrate hate crimes," said Jim Anderson, a spokesman for GLSEN.

About 83 percent of the students reported being verbally harassed in the past

year because of their sexual orientation, and 21 percent reported being physically assaulted.

More than 84 percent of the students reported hearing anti-gay remarks often at school, and most said that faculty and staff rarely intervened when overhearing such remarks. More than 23 percent said they sometimes heard anti-gay comments from teachers and staff.

Nearly 70 percent of the students said they felt unsafe in their schools because of their sexual orientation, and more than 30 percent said they had missed at least one day of classes in the past month because of their fears.

Gay Rights

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – More rights are being offered to gays and lesbians in California.

The new bill lets partners who register with the secretary of state's office make medical decisions for incapacitated partners, sue for wrongful death, adopt a partner's child and will property to a partner.

"This bill is about responsibility, respect, and most of all about family – and it's about time," Gov. Davis said.

Supporters called Davis' decision the biggest expansion of domestic partner rights in the country, putting the state alongside Vermont and Hawaii for acceptance of same-sex couples.

"This bill marks a stellar advance for lesbians and gays in California," said Democratic Assemblywoman Carole Migden, the bill's author.

Opponents label it an assault on traditional marriage and family values. In March 2000, more than 60 percent of California voters said that marriage should be between a man and a woman.

"In one fell swoop, Gray Davis has cheapened every marriage in the state, undermined the vote of the people, pandered to the special interests, frivolously spent taxpayer money and broken his written promise to the citizens of California," said Randy Thomasson, director of the Campaign for California Families.