

Political incorrectness and the U.S. Navy

Phyllis Zagano | Jan. 5, 2011 Just Catholic

A young reporter named Corinne Reilly has effectively ended the career of a highly-decorated naval aviator and two-time commanding officer.

Her big "scoop"? Four or five years ago Captain Owen Honors told stupid pilot jokes on silly videos, was told to stop, and did. As Executive Officer of USS Enterprise, Honors oversaw day-to-day operations of the Navy's second oldest ship -- where a sailor's average age is nineteen and a half. He also hosted "XO Movie Night."

Now Honors -- Enterprise's commanding officer since May 2010 -- is relieved of command.

Yes, the videos are ridiculous. Yes, his "humor" crossed several lines. But if his Facebook supporters (now over 21,000 and counting) are to be believed, Honors did in fact boost morale among the 5,800 men and probably not the women aboard the floating testosterone village.

There are several issues here.

First, Reilly and her newspaper, *The Virginian-Pilot*, received and profited from stolen U.S. Government property, much like Wikileaks's Julian Assange. Second, Reilly, who never served in the military -- and other journalists -- focused on so-called "anti-gay slurs" in the videos. Third, Admiral Mike Mullen, now Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was Chief of Naval Operations and ultimately responsible for the videos at the time they were made.

Who is at fault here? And what do we expect of leaders?

The highest standards of moral behavior? Honors is not wallowing in moral turpitude. Recall: married President Bill Clinton kept his job after the Monica Lewinsky affair.

Sensitivity to all races and religions? Honors made no racial or religious comments, but Barack Obama's speechwriter Jon Lovett is still at work. Lovett won a "Funniest Celebrity" competition in Washington D.C. by saying airport security pat downs were "giving a way for, you know, defrocked priests to get their lives back together, giving back to the community, lend a? Well, not lend a hand, but you know."

The admiral who fired Honors said "our leaders must be above reproach." What, exactly, does that mean?

Aircraft carriers are noisy, dirty, and boring places to work. Officers and enlisted crew work twelve-hour shifts under extremely dangerous conditions. Honors, a Naval Academy graduate who flew 31 different aircraft and made 700 landings on 15 different carriers, had an impeccable safety record.

His comedic talent leaves much to be desired and he demonstrated poor judgment in selecting his acting roles, but none of Honors' videos seems as bad as "Jersey Shore." There are frat boy pranks and "South Park" level gross-out skits. Still, not the type of hi-jinks the Navy wants the public to know about.

One scene in particular caught the media's eye. By triple screen overlay, Honors plays the role of a swaggering jet jockey in sunglasses to the left, and a buttoned down surface warfare officer (?SWO?) to the right of his executive officer persona in the middle. The jet jockey calls the surface warfare officer a "fag SWO-boy." That's what did Honors in.

Which brings us to last month's rushed repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Shipboard life is unending close quarters and difficult situations. Homosexual activity is not tolerated. Superstitions about women aboard ship linger. Now -- under the leadership of Admiral Mike Mullen (who, we cannot forget, is ultimately responsible for Honors' videos) -- the military is expected to change longstanding practice and belief by publicly accepting homosexual behavior. That could be difficult. The Uniform Code of Military Justice still outlaws sodomy and adultery.

Honors made mistakes several years ago, and his macho behavior rubs even more against today's politically correct grain. But has anyone looked into *The Virginian-Pilot*, which broadcast stolen videos including details about the ship's operations and locations? And what role did the wise-cracking White House and the nation's highest military officer play in these events?

Stereotypical naval aviators think everyone else is a sissy, but probably could care less if they are gay.

The bottom line is abundantly clear. It is about doing the job. Homosexuals serve with distinction and will continue to do so. They are not endangered by Honors' stupid fly-boy commentary. "Don't Care" has always been more important than "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

However, will military personnel -- especially chaplains -- who find homosexual behavior morally unacceptable be permitted to maintain their religion-based beliefs? Will they have access to the freedoms they defend?

Most importantly, are we entering an era when the republic's pluralism and freedom of belief is endangered by a media-driven politically correct secularism?

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