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LIFTING BAN ON GAYS IN ARMED FORCES

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**CTV:** It came from a surprising source but a leak from Washington tonight points to a dramatic policy change in the Canadian Armed forces. A memo out of the Pentagon indicates Canada is ready to lift the ban against homosexuals in the Armed Forces. It's a policy that has affected hundreds of homosexuals over the years and one man in particular. Jim O'Connell reports.

**REPORTER:** It was almost 30 years ago that Bert Sutcliffe's entire life came crashing down. He was enjoying a brilliant military career, about to be promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel but it all ended abruptly when they found out he was homosexual.

**SUTCLIFFE:** I went in and poured myself a drink and then I had a Luger in the bedroom and I went and got it and I put a couple of bullets in it and I put one against my temple and I tried it on the front of my forehead and then I thought, hell no, I'm not going to do that.

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REPORTER: Sutcliffe was thrown out of the military because of a policy banning homosexuals, a policy the government is finally about to change. The decision surfaced in this memo sent, of all places, to the US Pentagon saying, sexual orientation will no longer be considered an impediment to service in the Canadian Forces.

For Gay Rights Activists, it's a stunning victory.

DON PATTERSON: And if someone's going to lay down their life for (Equality for Gays) a country, then I think you have to have equality before the law.

REPORTER: Over the years, hundreds of homosexuals have either been banned or expelled from service because of a perceived threat to security and this British Columbia MP has been pushing 13 years to change the policy.

SVEND ROBINSON: It's certainly a historic day and for me an (NDP MP) affirmation of the importance of respect for the Charter in this country and a recognition that it applies to all people including lesbians and gays in the Canadian Armed Forces.

REPORTER: The Defence Department confirms it has reviewed its policy and says an announcement is pending but it's been delayed by some opposition within the Conservative caucus. One MP says the change is necessary because the charges of discrimination have been piling up.

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DON BLENKARN: It's my understanding that you can't win some of  
(Tory MP) these cases in the sense of doing what you've presently  
been doing. You may have to alter your way of doing things.

REPORTER: There was also swift reaction from the Human Rights  
Commission. A spokesman said the military has always  
been badly out of step with society on this issue and he said the  
commission will be delighted if such a blatant form of discrimination is  
no longer tolerated.

Jim O'Connell, CTV News in Ottawa.

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