

WAR/MILITARY

US plans to use soldiers in supplement study

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Soldiers will be the subjects of the first U.S. government study into the health consequences of a popular bodybuilding supplement that has recently flooded fitness store shelves, according to Army officials.

Officials at the Army Public Health Command told Stars and Stripes that they are identifying participants for a case control study on the effects of 1,3-dimethylamylamine, or DMAA, to determine if there is a link between the use of the amphetamine-like substance and reports of dangerous health conditions.

The military already has logged cases of kidney and liver failure,

seizures, loss of consciousness, heat injury and muscle breakdown that might be connected to DMAA, which is an active ingredient in about 18 U.S. fitness products that claim to increase workout performance. After two soldiers died while training last year and autopsies revealed the substance in their bodies, products with DMAA were removed from exchange stores at military bases around the world, though they remain available off base and on the Internet.

"We are in the process of identifying potential Army participants and (we) are still finalizing study procedures," according to a statement released by the command.

Results of the study are expected by late summer and will be released after Army and De-

partment of Defense leadership are briefed.

As part of its safety review of DMAA, the Army said it is also combing through reports of health problems from all branches of the military and following up with patients and providers.

"We are evaluating adverse health event cases possibly linked to DMAA products through a series of provider and patient interviews, and are applying established algorithms commonly used to assess side effects associated with drugs," according to the statement.

The safety review has added to concerns over the potential side effects of DMAA, which is sold as a natural dietary supplement and has never been reviewed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administra-

tion. Major League Baseball and the World Anti-Doping Agency have banned its use, and the government of New Zealand bars sales to anyone under 18.

There is also growing international consensus that DMAA is not a natural extract of geranium flowers, as claimed by supplement manufacturers, but actually a synthetic drug. Meanwhile, hundreds of millions of bottles of fitness powders and pills containing DMAA have been sold in the U.S. over the past five years.

Supplement makers maintain that research has already proved it is safe.

A study published last month in a peer-reviewed, open-access online journal tracked 25 healthy men over 10 weeks and found no adverse health problems in those

who took the substance, according to USPlabs. The company makes OxyElite Pro and Jack3d, two of the most popular DMAA fitness supplements.

"The findings of today's study are consistent with previous 2-week and 8-week studies which found no significant increase in blood pressure or liver and kidney function following chronic use of DMAA and DMAA-containing supplements," the company said.

USPlabs also cited four studies published online last fall that showed the substance did not seem to cause any negative effects to the blood, blood pressure or heart rate when taken by test subjects for a short period.

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Gay Marine draws attention with exuberant kiss at homecoming

BY AUDREY McAVOY
The Associated Press

HONOLULU — Sgt. Brandon Morgan didn't expect to become a global phenomenon when he kissed his partner upon returning from a six-month deployment to Afghanistan.

But then last weekend a friend posted a photo of their embrace on the Gay Marines page on Facebook. Morgan, in desert camouflage, is seen wrapping his legs around Dalan Wells' legs. A large American flag, draped floor to ceiling inside an aircraft hangar at a Marine base in Hawaii, is in the background.

Photos of exuberant servicemen and homecomings aren't new. But this one, taken some five months after the repeal of the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy prohibiting gay servicemen from openly acknowledging their sexuality, is among the first showing a gay active-duty serviceman in uniform kissing his partner at a

homecoming.

More than 40,000 people have clicked the "like" button for the photo on Facebook, and thousands have shared it with their friends on several social media sites. Journalists are inundating Morgan with interview requests, and supporters from as far away as Italy are flooding his inbox with messages of thanks and encouragement.

The 25-year-old from Oakdale, Calif., said it was "a great moment in history" but he really just wanted to show his love to Wells when he landed in Hawaii on Feb. 22.

"I'm so honored to be part of something that people have fought so hard for in Congress, the White House and the military. But when it comes down to it, we didn't intend for this go to worldwide. We were just happy to be together," Morgan said Thursday in a telephone interview.

Two female Navy sailors shared the first same-sex military homecoming kiss in December when

one returned home to Virginia after 80 days at sea.

Many of the more than 10,000 comments on the Gay Marine page's posting of the photo page celebrated the image.

Few disparaged Morgan for kissing a man. The critical comments generally questioned the appropriateness of a Marine in uniform wrapping his legs around a partner.

Feedback from fellow Marines has been positive too, Morgan said, though he has some regret for jumping on Wells.

He called that "excess amount of public display of affection."

His superiors have talked to him about it, he said, and he agrees he went a little too far. The Marines have rules, even at homecomings, Morgan said.

"I love him so much. It was my chance to show him how much I love him openly. But then again, I'm still a Marine," he said.



DAVID LEWIS/AP

Sgt. Brandon Morgan, right, is embraced by his partner Dalan Wells in a helicopter hangar at a Marine base in Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, upon returning from Afghanistan Feb. 22.

Panetta: Planning under way for more tributes to celebrate Iraq War troops

WASHINGTON — Many of the troops who attended Wednesday night's state dinner to honor troops from the Iraq War said they hoped to see similar, more inclusive tributes in the near future.



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On Thursday night, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta promised those plans are underway.

"Last night, at the White House, we honored those who served in Iraq," he told an audience at the University of Louisville. "It was the beginning, not the end, of a series of tributes this country will pay to veterans of that conflict."

His remarks echoed President Barack Obama's promise to the Iraq War veterans earlier in the week.

"History reminds us of our obligations as a nation at moments like this," Panetta said. "This year will mark the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War, a time when our veterans didn't always receive the respect and

the thanks that they so richly deserved — and that's a mistake that we must never repeat."

And Pentagon leaders have said they hope to hold celebrations across the country honoring the service and sacrifices of those who served in Iraq.

But so far, no details of any such plans have been made public. Defense leaders have publicly resisted plans for a New York City ticker-tape parade, although they have privately lauded the parade celebration held in St. Louis last month.

— Leo Shane III

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