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## **Palm Center Statement on Support by Gen. Joseph Dunford, Jr., Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for Transgender Service** *Current and Former Joint Chiefs Chairmen Back Inclusive Policy*

**SAN FRANCISCO, CA** – [Palm Center](#) Director Aaron Belkin released the following statement after General Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told senators that all transgender troops capable of meeting standards of fitness and deployability should be permitted to remain in service:

**“President Trump has consistently said that he would listen to the generals when making military policy. The highest ranking member of our armed forces, Gen. Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., could not have been clearer when asked his views about transgender military service: He believes that ‘any individual who meets the physical and mental standards and is worldwide deployable and is currently serving should be afforded the opportunity to continue to serve.’ An estimated 12,800 troops currently defending our country are transgender, and they are no less deployable than their peers. As Gen. Dunford told the Senate, these troops are serving ‘with honor and valor.’ The military does not want to reverse its promises to its service members, or to disrupt readiness by wasting badly needed talent and ripping apart cohesive units. Only the politics of division could take aim at these American patriots.”**

Gen. Dunford made his comments in response to a question by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), during hearings of the Senate Armed Services Committee, which is considering him for reappointment. A bipartisan bill was introduced in the Senate earlier this month to prevent President Trump from banning transgender troops. Senators John McCain (R-AZ), Jack Reed (D-RI) and Susan Collins (R-ME) joined Gillibrand as co-sponsors.

Gen. Dunford’s support for transgender service means that all three of the most recent Joint Chiefs Chairmen have endorsed inclusive policy. [Admiral Mike Mullen](#), citing the “harm to readiness and morale” caused by “don’t ask, don’t tell,” urged political leaders “to respect the military’s judgment and not to breach the faith of service members who defend our freedoms.” He noted that “the military conducted a thorough research process on this issue and concluded that inclusive policy for transgender troops promotes readiness.” [General Martin](#)

[Dempsey](#) said of transgender troops that “the service of men and women who volunteer and who meet our standards of service is a blessing, not a burden.”

Additionally, fifty-six [retired generals and admirals](#) recently came out in support of transgender service, stating that a ban would cause "significant disruptions" to readiness, “deprive the military of mission-critical talent” and "compromise the integrity of transgender troops who would be forced to live a lie, as well as non-transgender peers who would be forced to choose between reporting their comrades or disobeying policy.”

For video of Gen. Dunford’s comments, which begin at 00:58:45, click [here](#). A partial transcript includes the following:

**GILLIBRAND:** Do you agree that our thousands of openly serving transgender men and women have served their country with honor and valor?

**DUNFORD:** I do Senator. I would just probably say that I believe any individual who meets the physical and mental standards and is worldwide deployable and is currently serving should be afforded the opportunity to continue to serve.

**GILLIBRAND:** Thank you. If reappointed, can you promise currently serving transgender individuals who have followed Department policy and meet every requirement, as you just said, asked of them, that they will not be separated from the armed services based solely on their gender identity?

**DUNFORD:** Senator, I can promise that that will be my advice. What I’ve just articulated is the advice I’ve provided in private and I’ve just provided in public.

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#### ***About The Palm Center***

*The Palm Center is an independent research institute committed to sponsoring state-of-the-art scholarship to enhance the quality of public dialogue about critical and controversial issues of the day. Our research has been published in leading social science journals and extensively consulted and cited by US military leaders. The Palm Center seeks to be a resource for scholars, policymakers, journalists, opinion leaders, students and the public at large. For more information, visit us at [www.palmcenter.org](http://www.palmcenter.org).*