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**BRITISH PRESS PRINTS MISLEADING STORY ON EFFECTS OF GAYS IN MILITARY  
American Scholars Set Record Straight**

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SANTA BARBARA, CA, October 18, 2007 - A British press report of a military "backlash" against the lifting of the ban on gay service makes exaggerated and unfounded assertions, according to American experts on gays in the military. An article this week in the conservative tabloid, the Daily Mail, reports a "spate of resignations in protest" by members of the British Armed Forces in 2000, when the United Kingdom ended its policy of excluding gays and lesbians from the armed forces.

The article reports the release of a 2002 Ministry of Defence (MOD) study that "reveals a far stronger backlash among junior ranks than was acknowledged at the time." It says the Navy "suffered a loss of experienced senior rates and warrant officers" and suggests that the MOD report concluded that "soldiers should not be compelled to share accommodations with persons of a different gender or sexual orientation."

But according to Aaron Belkin, director of the Palm Center at the University of California, Santa Barbara, the Daily Mail story is misleading. Both the 2002 MOD study and an earlier MOD investigation from 2000, Belkin said, indicate that, despite resignation threats, only one person's departure can be tied directly to the lifting of the ban. "There remains some disquiet in the Senior Ratings' Messes concerning the policy on homosexuality within the Service," says the report. "This has manifested itself in a number of personnel electing to leave the Service, although in only one case was the policy change cited as the only reason for going. Nonetheless, homosexuality is not a major issue and, to put the effect of the policy change into context, the introduction of Pay 2000 and pay grading caused a far greater reaction."

In fact, Belkin says, the study does not attribute to MOD the conclusion that soldiers "should not be" forced to share accommodations with gays; it merely cites this as a concern of some service members. "This report echoes what earlier reports already concluded," said Dr. Belkin, who teaches political



science at UC-Santa Barbara. "A minority of military personnel continued to object to ending discrimination even after the ban was lifted. But the overwhelming conclusion of inquiries into the change was that a policy of equality has done no damage to the military; to the contrary, it has actually improved effectiveness by increasing access to quality people and reducing unnecessary tensions resulting from deception and sanctioned discrimination."

The Palm Center released a 60-page study of the effects of lifting the ban on gay service in the British Forces. According to the study, two officers resigned after the ban was lifted, but the officers did not leave because they refused to tolerate homosexuals serving, but because they felt civilian politics had disrespected military opinion. "What you sometimes see in the rare case of a public resignation," said Belkin, "is that someone who was ready to leave anyway used the opportunity to express their feelings about military autonomy and tradition." Belkin added that any loss of such personnel has to be weighed against the much larger gains in talent, recruitment and openness, and reductions in harassment and anxiety over sexual orientation. The study also concluded that the policy change was an "unqualified success," and that "concerns of dire consequences have been replaced by a general recognition that the transition has proceeded smoothly."

All three studies—the Palm Center study and the two MOD reports—offered very consistent findings that the policy had done no damage, and that the only effects of reform were positive ones. The 2002 MOD report says "the overwhelming consensus is that this policy change appears to have had little impact" in the Army, and that one result has been greater tolerance and a focus on personality instead of sexual orientation. In the Navy, "the overall response appears to be a positive one," and "the problems initially perceived have not been encountered, and for most personnel sexual orientation is a 'non-issue.'" And in the Royal Air Force, the consensus was that the policy change was "yesterday's news." It concludes that, overall, "there has been no discernible impact on operational efficiency," and "no further review of the Armed Forces policy on homosexuality is currently judged necessary."

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The Michael D. Palm Center, formerly the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military, is a research institute at the University of California, Santa Barbara. The Center uses rigorous social science to inform public discussions of controversial social issues, enabling policy outcomes to be informed more by evidence than by emotion. Its data-driven approach is premised on the notion that the public makes wise choices on social issues when high-quality information is available. For more information, visit [www.palmcenter.org](http://www.palmcenter.org).