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FORMER PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER CALLS FOR REPEAL OF GAY BAN

Statement of Aaron Belkin, Director, Michael D. Palm Center, University of California, Santa Barbara

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SANTA BARBARA, CA, May 17, 2007 - Former President Jimmy Carter has issued a statement opposing the "don't ask, don't tell" policy, which bans gays and lesbians from serving openly in the military. President Carter tied his position on the gay ban to his support for human rights and his belief that the policy has failed, noting that over 11,000 service members have been fired since the current policy took effect in 1994. "Our military can be most effective if these dedicated individuals are allowed to serve," he wrote in his April 30 statement.

As former Commander-in-Chief and a U.S. Naval Academy alumnus, President Carter's opinions will be taken seriously. A number of military, civic and political leaders have come out against the policy because they say that it adds to the strain on our armed services during a time of extended mobilization. President Carter's statement may encourage those in power to take a fresh look at the evidence and to re-assess whether this policy well serves the U.S. military.

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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.