



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Indra Lusero, Assistant Director, 303-902-9402, indralusero@palmcenter.ucsb.edu

FORMER TOP GENERAL CALLS ON MILITARY TO INCLUDE GAYS General John Shalikashvili Says Integration Will Not Harm U.S. Military

SANTA BARBARA, CA, January 2, 2007 - General John Shalikashvili, who served as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1993 through 1997, published an op-ed in today's New York Times calling for the end of "don't ask, don't tell", the policy which prohibits gays and lesbians from serving openly in the military. Shalikashvili says that while the military is ready for gays and lesbians to serve openly, political leaders should take a cautious approach to change rather than rushing to enact a new policy of integration.

According to Professor Aaron Belkin, Director of the Michael D. Palm Center, General Shalikashvili is the most senior officer to conclude that allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly will not harm the military. "General Shalikashvili is the latest in a string of seasoned military leaders who have looked hard at the issue and determined it's time for change," Belkin said. In 2005, ten retired admirals and generals publicly announced their support for repealing the current gay ban.

The Palm Center, formerly named the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military, is an official research unit of the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Among the data that General Shalikashvili cites in today's op-ed is a new poll of 545 troops who served in Afghanistan and Iraq. The poll, which was designed by the Palm Center and administered by Zogby International, found that 73 percent of service members are personally comfortable interacting with gays and lesbians. Of the 20 percent who are not comfortable, 15 percent are "somewhat" uncomfortable while 5 percent are "very" uncomfortable.

General Shalikashvili also cited the experiences of 24 foreign militaries which have allowed gays and lesbians to serve openly without suffering a decrease in military effectiveness. The Palm Center has published seven studies of foreign military decisions to include openly gay and lesbian service members, including a paper titled, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell: Is the Gay Ban Based on Military Necessity" which appeared in 2003 in *Parameters*, the official journal of the U.S. Army War College. That study, which was based on interviews with 104 experts in Britain, Israel, Australia, and Canada, concluded that allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly had not undermined military readiness.



According to Belkin, General Shalikashvili's op-ed reflects a broad shift in military attitudes towards gays and lesbians since the current policy was devised in 1993. That year, when former President Bill Clinton tried to compel the Pentagon to allow gays and lesbians to serve openly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff argued that doing so would undermine military effectiveness. "The evidence that has emerged since then is overwhelming, and shows that our service members can work effectively with gays and lesbians," Belkin said.

He noted that a West Point Cadet, Alexander Raggio, recently received a prize from his department for a senior honors thesis calling for the repeal of "don't ask, don't tell", and that several polls have confirmed that service members are personally comfortable around gays and lesbians.

The General's op-ed in the New York Times was picked up by 77 broadcast media outlets in North America, including CNN (The Situation Room & Paula Zahn Now) and ABC (America this Morning).

###

The Michael D. Palm Center is an official research unit of the University of California, Santa Barbara. The Center's Don't Ask, Don't Tell Project is governed by a distinguished board of advisors including the Honorable Lawrence J. Korb of the Center for American Progress, Honorable Coit Blacker of Stanford University and Professor Janet Halley of Harvard Law School. More information is available.