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**GAY BAN COMPROMISES MILITARY REPUTATION, NEW STUDY FINDS**  
Original Data Suggest That Policy Tarnishes Military, Even Among Conservatives

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SANTA BARBARA, CA, January 14, 2008 - The "don't ask, don't tell" policy tarnishes the reputation of the U.S. armed forces, even among conservative audiences, according to a new study published by the journal *Armed Forces and Society*. The study, titled, "'Don't Ask, Don't Tell': Does the Gay Ban Undermine the Military's Reputation?" was authored by Aaron Belkin, Director of the Palm Center and Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Santa Barbara. *Armed Forces and Society* is the official journal of the Inter-University Seminar, the leading academic society of scholars who study civil-military relations, with Fellows in over 35 countries.

According to Belkin, "the data show quite clearly that in the eyes of the American people, 'don't ask, don't tell' casts the military as being on the wrong side of history and the wrong side of the culture, even among conservatives." The new study includes original research which suggests that the policy harms the military's reputation in several ways.

First, it prompts journalists to criticize the armed forces while attracting almost no favorable coverage. Belkin and his staff contacted 140 conservative, mostly small-town newspapers which had endorsed President Bush in the 2004 elections, and found that only 11 percent of the editorial staffs of these papers support "don't ask, don't tell." At least 60 editorials opposing the policy have appeared during the past five years, while not a single pro-ban editorial was published during that time.

Second, "don't ask, don't tell" provides a vehicle for anti-military protesters to point to ways that military culture conflicts with widely accepted civilian values. Belkin analyzed a number of cases in which anti-military protesters used "don't ask, don't tell" as an organizing issue for their campaigns, even though participants in the movements appeared to feel much more strongly about their general opposition to the military than about the ban itself. One study that Belkin cites reported that high schools denied military recruiters access to campus on 19,228 separate occasions in 1999, in part as an effort to "challenge the Pentagon's policy on homosexuals in the military."



Third, the policy makes more people embarrassed by the military than proud of it, even among conservatives. Conservatives were heavily over-represented in the pool of respondents because the sample was designed to match the characteristics of a cohort of new military recruits: mostly young, male and conservative. According to polling data included in the study, 24.2 percent of respondents said that the policy makes them embarrassed by the military while 17.5 percent said that the policy makes them proud. Fifty-six percent said that the policy has no impact on their feelings about the military.

Finally, the policy is inconsistent with the attitudes of the troops. Belkin cites polling data as well as case studies to show that heterosexual service members are comfortable interacting with gays and lesbians, and would prefer that their gay peers reveal their sexual orientation rather than remain in the closet.

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