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**MARINE COMMANDANT APPEARS TO RESIST WHITE HOUSE ON GAY BAN
Challenge Could Raise Questions of Civilian Control of Military**

SANTA BARBARA, CA, November 2, 2009 - Marine Corps Commandant General James Conway is opposing President Obama's pledge to repeal "don't ask, don't tell," the Washington Times is reporting today. Citing a former senior Pentagon official, the Times says that General Conway, "has emerged in internal Pentagon deliberations as the most outspoken opponent of permitting gay men and women to serve openly in the U.S. military." According to the Times, the official "has been privy to private conversations on the matter," and says that "Conway has gone further than others in stating his opposition to a change in policy."

The Times asked General Conway to comment, and his spokesman, Major David Nevers, responded with the following statement: "Our Marines are currently engaged in two fights, and our focus should not be drawn away from those priorities. When the time is right, we have full confidence that we will be asked to provide the best military advice concerning the readiness of the Corps as it relates to this issue."

According to Aaron Belkin, Director of the Palm Center, General Conway's apparent comments may foreshadow arguments that will be emphasized in Congressional hearings, namely that wars in Iraq and Afghanistan preclude the military from focusing on repeal. "It does appear that these comments are a warning shot to proponents, including the White House," said Belkin.

Others expressed concern that Conway's opposition could raise thorny questions of civilian control over the military. "The President has declared which way policy is heading," said Professor Diane Mazur. "There is no faster way for a Commander-in-Chief to lose the respect of those serving under him than to allow his Service Chiefs to march in an opposite direction." Mazur is Professor of Law and the University of Florida and an expert on civil-military relations

According to Colonel Dick Klass (USAF, ret.), similar issues emerged sixteen years ago when former President Bill Clinton tried to repeal the gay ban. "Clinton's mistake was to call the Chiefs into the Oval Office and ask them what they thought about gays in the military," said Klass. "What Clinton should have done, and what Obama should do, is call the Chiefs in, explain that repealing the ban is a matter of national security, and tell them that if they are uncomfortable with that, they should resign."

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The Palm Center is a think tank at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Since 1998, the Center has been a leader in commissioning and disseminating research in the areas of gender, sexuality, and the military. For more information visit www.palmcenter.ucsb.edu.