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### **MILITARY CHIEF SAYS HOMOSEXUALITY IS IMMORAL**

Anti-Gay Remarks of Military Chief Suggest Gay Ban Lacks Rationale, With No Defense Left, Military Calls Homosexuality Immoral

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SANTA BARBARA, CA, March 13, 2007 - After Marine Gen. Peter Pace, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, called homosexuality "immoral" yesterday and likened it to adultery, military analysts said his comment suggests the armed forces have run out of rationales for banning known gays from service. "This might be the beginning of the end," said Aaron Belkin, Director of the Palm Center and Associate Professor of Political Science at University of California, Santa Barbara, "but it may be a long, drawn-out ending." Belkin, whose research center studies "don't ask, don't tell," said that returning to talk of morality showed the absence of military rationales for the gay ban at a time when capable gay soldiers are being replaced by drug abusers, felons and high school drop-outs.

"If you want to talk about morality, the explosion of moral waivers the military is granting to fill its shortfalls is a far greater concern than the service of gays who are ready, willing and able to fight," Belkin said. A Palm Center study released last month found that the number of convicted felons who enlisted in the U.S. military nearly doubled in the past three years under the moral waiver program which enlists those who otherwise would not qualify due to poor behavior.

Pace made his remarks in an interview yesterday with the Chicago Tribune. "I believe homosexual acts between two individuals are immoral and that we should not condone immoral acts," he told the Tribune. Nathaniel Frank, a Senior Research Fellow at the Palm Center who is writing a book on the gay exclusion rule to be published next year by St. Martin's Press, said that in recent history, military leaders had carefully constructed a rationale for the gay ban that sought to confine its reasoning to military necessity rather than morality or bias. "They came up with the unit cohesion rationale," Frank explained, "which argued that the presence of gays and lesbians in a unit would undermine the morale, readiness and operational effectiveness of the military. For some, this was just a cover for the real source of their resistance to gay service, which was moral." But Frank said overwhelming evidence from the U.S. and foreign militaries showed that openly gay service does not impair the military. In a January op-ed in the New York Times, Pace's predecessor, Gen. John Shalikashvili, called for an end to



gay exclusion, saying research has shown that gay service does not undermine cohesion.

"That statement more or less ended the debate over unit cohesion," Frank said, "forcing the voices opposed to gay service to revert to moral dogma. But there is really no basis for excluding an entire group of people simply because some of the military has a moral problem with those people. If it doesn't translate into military impairment, they'll probably need to just grin and bear it. No one ever said that, when you serve your country, you're entitled to choose everyone you serve with."

Pace's comments are increasingly a minority opinion. They are out of step not only with Gen. Shalikashvili's sentiment, but with that of a growing chorus of military officers who have called for an end to discrimination; a majority of enlisted personnel who now say they are personally comfortable with gay people; our major allies around the world which let gays serve openly; the American public who overwhelmingly favors letting gays serve; and even Dick Cheney, who has called the notion that gay soldiers are a security risk "a bit of an old chestnut."

Belkin said Pace's comments will strike many as hypocritical because the military relies on its estimated 65,000 gay troops for its deployment obligations around the world. "If you really could, and did, ban all gays from the military, at least you could say you're being consistent," Belkin said. "But to say you disapprove of their presence while you depend on their service, that doesn't strike most Americans as particularly fair or reasonable." He added: "the whiff of hypocrisy is even stronger when you realize the military let in 1600 convicted felons under the moral waiver program last year, but Pace wants to draw the line at gays."

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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).