



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 25, 2010

CONTACT: Indra Lusero, Assistant Director, 303-902-9402, lusero@palmcenter.ucsb.edu

NAVY CHIEF SAYS POLLING TROOPS HAS RISKS

New Remarks to Palm Center from Top Officer

Santa Barbara, February 25, 2010 -- In a [conversation](#) with Dr. Nathaniel Frank today, Admiral Gary Roughead, Chief of Naval Operations, acknowledged difficulties with the plan to poll U.S. troops on their personal feelings about serving with gays. "We've never assessed the force because it's not our practice to go within our military and poll our force to determine if they like the laws of the land or not," Admiral Roughead told Frank in a discussion immediately following the Admiral's testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee. "That gets you into a very difficult regime."

Frank, Senior Research Fellow at the Palm Center, agreed with Admiral Roughead. "The military is a top-down institution for good reason," he said. "Acknowledging the concerns of the troops is important, but that's not the same as using an opinion poll as the basis for making policy." Senate Armed Services Chairman Carl Levin has also said that, while it is important to remain sensitive to the concerns of service members, "An army is not a democracy."

This month, the Palm Center released a policy memorandum with eight research recommendations to the new Pentagon Working Group on gays in the military. One of the recommendations supports Admiral Roughead's observation:

Consult troops for relevant information rather than to ask their permission for reform. It is important to be sensitive to the concerns and anxieties of military members as options are weighed about lifting the ban on openly gay service. Yet it is crucial that, when uniformed personnel are consulted on this matter, the purpose of the consultations be made clear: Polls or anecdotes about the personal preferences of enlisted personnel and junior officers should not be used as a basis to determine policy, and they do not constitute evidence about the critical question of what impact lifting the ban will have on cohesion, recruitment, and effectiveness. In Britain and Canada, approximately two-thirds of troops surveyed said that they would not work with gays, yet when inclusive policies were implemented, just a handful of service members actually retired.

This week, the Palm Center also released a major study describing how foreign militaries that allow openly gay service successfully accomplished transitions without long delays. Admiral Roughead told Frank that, "as we



do this assessment we want to look at everything we can," including other militaries. But he emphasized that the focus should be on U.S. troops, not their foreign counterparts.

The Palm Center report, is entitled, "Gays in Foreign Militaries 2010: A Global Primer." Among its research findings is the conclusion that implementation of repeal should be conducted swiftly and with the solid support of top leaders.

###

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.