



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

**NEW STUDY OF OPENLY GAY FOREIGNERS WHO SERVED WITH U.S. FORCES IN IRAQ,
OTHER JOINT OPERATIONS**

Date: February 9, 2004

(WASHINGTON) A new study released today revealed that openly gay soldiers who served in multinational units with American forces in Operation Iraqi Freedom and other joint operations did not undermine unit cohesion, were accepted by U.S. soldiers they served with on a daily basis, and promoted the successful accomplishment of their units' missions.

The central rationale for the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy on gays in the military is that allowing openly gay personnel to serve will undermine unit cohesion in our Armed Forces. The study commissioned by the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military (CSSMM) at the University of California, Santa Barbara - entitled "Multinational Military Units and Homosexual Personnel" -- poses serious implications for this driving purpose behind this controversial U.S. defense policy.

"We found through academic investigation and analysis that the presence of acknowledged gay service members clearly has not compromised unit cohesion or operational effectiveness among U.S. military personnel," said Dr. Aaron Belkin, director of CSSMM and a professor at UC Santa Barbara. "In fact, all of our evidence comes from situations where the U.S. military ordered American units to serve with these openly gay allied soldiers and officers in multinational units, such as those recently deployed in Operation Iraqi Freedom."

The study's authors -- CSSMM Assistant Director Geoffrey Bateman and Dr. Sameera Dalvi of the University of Southampton (UK) -- found through documented case studies that American personnel are able to interact with and work successfully with acknowledged gay personnel from foreign militaries, including close allies in recent conflicts like the British military. When occasional conflicts do arise, the study found, they tend to be minor and are resolved successfully in an informal manner.

"The Pentagon would presumably defend every instance where they have assigned American soldiers to serve with openly gay allied soldiers and officers, particularly in Iraq," Dr. Belkin said. "Therefore,



this study's conclusions raise serious questions about the soundness of the rationale behind "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," particularly when most of our leading military allies around the world, particularly Britain and Australia, have integrated openly gay personnel into every branch of their armed forces."

On an institutional level, the study also finds that neither NATO nor the United Nations has addressed the coordination of divergent policies concerning sexual orientation in an official manner, largely because these organizations are preoccupied with more pressing concerns, and because openly homosexual personnel are not seen as sources of tension - not even for U.S. personnel serving with them.

Among the several case studies featured is that of Lieutenant Rolf Kurth of the Royal Navy, who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom along with numerous U.S. sailors on board ships deployed in the Persian Gulf. Kurth reported that he was open about his sexual orientation, which is sanctioned in the British military, and that he was "the direct link" on day-to-day work matters between a team of American sailors and British sailors on board a RN ship. Kurth reports in the study that unit cohesion was solid and unaffected, and he was completely accepted by the Americans he served with.

Lt. Kurth, along with Lt. Commander Craig Jones of the Royal Navy, joined Dr. Belkin in a two-part CSSMM academic seminar in Washington, D.C., where the report was released. The seminar included a discussion at the National Press Club and a luncheon briefing for Congressional and Bush Administration staff on Capitol Hill. Lt. Commander Jones is also featured in a case study included in the report, and is the current Vice-Chair of the UK Armed Forces Gay and Lesbian Association.

The United States is one of the last western powers to still ban gays and lesbians from military service. Twenty four nations including most of NATO have lifted their bans on open gays and lesbians.

The Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military is an official research unit of the University of California, Santa Barbara. The Center 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. Its mission is to promote the study of gays, lesbians, and other sexual minorities in the armed forces.