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NEW WEB SITE TRACKS GATES'S PREDICTION ABOUT GAY TROOPS

SANTA BARBARA, CA – October 17, 2010 -- The Palm Center has established a website to track Defense Secretary Robert Gates's prediction that last week's historic decision to suspend "don't ask, don't tell" would have "enormous consequences." The website, www.enormousconsequences.com, includes all reported instances of harm to unit cohesion, discipline and privacy that have arisen during this period of open gay service. Palm scholars will update it regularly.

Given the prediction of short term consequences, the absence of training, and the widespread presence of openly gay troops in the ranks, Palm Center scholars decided that it was essential to begin tracking these consequences immediately. Last week, a Pentagon official, Under Secretary of Defense Clifford Stanley, said that suspending the ban would "cause significant disruptions to the force in the short term." The Palm Center is unaware of any Pentagon efforts to train service members in preparation for last week's suspension of the gay ban. Research shows that at least two-thirds of service members already know a gay or lesbian peer in their unit.

Palm Center Director Aaron Belkin said that "Secretary Gates's prediction of 'enormous consequences' is no incidental, throwaway line. The assertion that these consequences would arise has been the justification for 'don't ask, don't tell' for 17 years. Now that the ban has been suspended, we are searching vigilantly for such consequences, and we will use the new web site as a hub for reporting what we find." Last week, the Palm Center submitted a Freedom of Information Act request for all documentation of reported negative consequences of the suspension of "don't ask, don't tell."

Christopher Neff, Deputy Executive Director of the Palm Center, added, "This is about dealing with the facts on the ground. Thus far, the Services appear to have successfully adjusted to this temporary period without 'don't ask, don't tell.' I think the takeaway should be to give them credit, not to say that the sky is falling."

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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.