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OP-EP OFFERS FRESH EXPLANATION OF DECLINE IN GAY DISCHARGES Military Times Publishes Novel Account of Historical Trend

SANTA BARBARA, CA, April 28, 2004 - An op-ed appearing in the current editions of three Military Times newspapers offers a new explanation for the decline in gay discharges during recent conflicts in the Middle East. According to the piece, titled "Zealous Activists Doing a Disservice to Gay Soldiers Who Serve Willingly," the decline in gay discharges during wartime may reflect gay and lesbian service members' increased willingness to remain in uniform to do their duty.

Jeff Cleghorn, the author of the op-ed, argues that "Perhaps the reason fewer gays are being discharged during this war may be that gay troops - like the gay infantryman in Afghanistan - are choosing to remain in uniform to serve in combat and do their patriotic duty, not because the Pentagon is forcing them to remain in the military." The op-ed appears in the May 3, 2004 editions of the widely-read Army Times, Navy Times, and Marine Corps Times.

Previous explanations for the decline in gay discharges during wartime had focused on the Pentagon's heightened need for troops, and hence relaxed enforcement of the gay ban, rather than the motivations of gay and lesbian service members.

Cleghorn, the Director of the Military Education Initiative (www.military-education.org), is responding to a University of California study by Dr. Rhonda Evans that shows that since World War II, the number of gay discharges has always declined during wartime. The findings of that study, "A History of the Service of Ethnic Minorities in the U.S. Armed Forces," were confirmed in the context of the recent wars in the Middle East when the Service Members Legal Defense Network reported a decline in gay discharges during the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The University of California study is available at

http://www.palmcenter.org/publications/dadt/a_history_of_the_service_of_ethnic_minorities_in_the_us_armed_forces.

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



Blackler 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.