



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### PALM SCHOLARS REACT TO PENTAGON CHANGES ON GAY TROOPS Experts See Important Progress from Military, Political Work Ahead

\*\*\*NOTE: Tomorrow, Friday, The Palm Center will host a media call at 10am EDT with experts and former LGBT military. CALL IN: (712) 451-6100, PASS CODE: 1028279# (Details below)

SANTA BARBARA, CA, March 25, 2010—The Pentagon today announced it would make it harder to discharge lesbian and gay service members by issuing rules that only a General or Admiral can initiate firings, by adding a litmus test for the type of information that can start an investigation, and by limiting third party outings. [Click here](#) to see the [summary of changes](#), and revised procedures for discharging [enlisted personnel](#) and [officers](#).

Following are comments by Palm Center's senior scholars on today's Pentagon announcement.

Aaron Belkin, Director, and Associate Professor of Political Science, University of California, Santa Barbara: The changes announced today are the first cracks in “don’t ask, don’t tell” since the policy was implemented seventeen years ago. While the operational impact of the Obama Rule may be limited, the political impact will be widely felt. These steps represent important forward movement. They send a signal to the military chain of command and the public that repeal is on the horizon, and that the military is prepared.

Nathaniel Frank, Senior Research Fellow, and author of *Unfriendly Fire: How the Gay Ban Undermines the Military and Weakens America*:

Today the Pentagon took an important step to end “don’t ask, don’t tell” by making it harder to fire lesbian and gay troops. For over two hundred years, the U.S. military was hostile to homosexuality, but today the Pentagon sent a message that lesbians and gays can serve our country without harming the force. By making it more difficult to fire gay service members, the Pentagon has signaled that service members who are widely known to be gay should continue to serve.

The full impact of the changes will depend on how they are actually enforced. We know that past attempts to dress up a bad military policy have been like putting lipstick on a pig and have failed. Perception is reality, and if the higher bars to discharge are not actually used to reduce firings and create a sense of privacy for gay troops,



these changes will be a charade.

As Secretary Gates said today, the Pentagon could have raised the bar even higher, but chose not to. So while the administration is to be commended for taking this step, its work is far from over. As the focus shifts to Congress, the President has a major role to play to end the ban outright. If the President builds on this step by fighting successfully for legislative repeal, he will ensure his place in civil rights history not only for his own story, but as a fierce advocate of equal treatment.

Diane Mazur, Legal Co-Director, and Professor of Law, University of Florida Levin College of Law, former Captain, USAF:

When the military requires high-level approval for personnel actions, it is indicating that it believes enforcement of the policy is harming military effectiveness. In chipping away at the effects of the law, the Pentagon is conceding that knowledge of openly gay colleagues is not a problem, which is the whole basis of the policy. The changes announced today under the Obama Rule show repeal is inevitable.

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#### PRESS BRIEFING WITH SCHOLARS AND EXPERTS

At 10 a.m. EDT, Dr. Nathaniel Frank will be joined by Rear Admiral Alan Steinman, (Ret.) and former Air Force Captain Diane Mazur to break down today's announcement into what it really means for the future of our military and the gay ban.

#### WHO:

Dr. Nathaniel Frank, Senior Research Fellow at the Palm Center and author of "Unfriendly Fire"; Rear Admiral Alan Steinman, M.P.H., M.D., former Director of Health and Safety for the Coast Guard and one of the highest ranking people to come out as gay; and Diane Mazur, Legal Co-Director, and Professor of Law, University of Florida Levin College of Law, former Captain, USAF:

WHAT: Media briefing conference call about "don't ask, don't tell" and the new Pentagon regulations

WHEN: TOMORROW, March 26, 2010, 10:00 AM EDT

CALL IN: (712) 451-6100

PASS CODE: 1028279#

#### BIOS:

Dr. Nathaniel Frank, Senior Research Fellow at the Palm Center and author of "Unfriendly Fire" has recently



published the study "Gays in Foreign Militaries 2010: A Global Primer" and will discuss key points of available research, including a recent study in the American Psychological Association's journal, "Military Psychology", which points out that coming out does not affect unit cohesion.

Rear Admiral Alan Steinman, M.P.H., M.D., former Director of Health and Safety for the Coast Guard and Presidential appointee to the Special Oversight Board for Department of Defense Investigations of Gulf-War Chemical and Biological Incidents is one of the highest ranking people to come out as gay, when he publicly disclosed his sexual orientation to the New York Times in 2003. A graduate of MIT, he also holds a Master of Public Health, and is a medical doctor. RADM Steinman will be available to address military-related issues.

Diane Mazur, J.D., Legal Co-Director of the Palm Center and Professor of Law at the University of Florida College of Law teaches courses in evidence, constitutional law, professional responsibility, and civil-military relations, and her research focuses on the constitutional, legal, and cultural relationship of the military to civilian society. She is also an Advisor to the National Institute of Military Justice and a Senior Editor for the Journal of National Security Law and Policy. Professor Mazur is a former aircraft and munitions maintenance officer in the United States Air Force, and before entering law teaching she practiced law with the Modrall Law Firm in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

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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](http://www.palmcenter.ucsb.edu).