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PENTAGON FIRED 244 GAY DOCTORS, NURSES, MEDICAL SPECIALISTS
New Data Show Shortage in Medical Personnel Prompts Experts to Question Policy

SANTA BARBARA, CA, January 23, 2006 - A University of California research center released data today showing that the military has fired 244 medical specialists under the "don't ask, don't tell" policy. The figures, which cover 1994 through 2003, the first ten years of the policy, were obtained from the Pentagon by the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military (CSSMM) with the help of Rep. Marty Meehan, a Massachusetts Democrat who sits on the House Armed Services Committee. The information is being reported today by the Associated Press.

Dr. Aaron Belkin, Director of CSSMM and an associate professor of political science at University of California, Santa Barbara, said the discharges provide evidence that the gay ban is hampering military readiness. "The consequences of shortfalls in medical specialists during wartime are serious," he said. "When the military lacks the medical personnel it needs on the frontlines, it compromises the well-being not only of its injured troops, but of the overextended specialists who have to work longer tours to replace those who have been discharged."

According to the new data, the 244 service members discharged under the gay exclusion policy included physicians, nurses, biomedical laboratory technicians and other highly trained medical specialists. The revelation comes at a time when the military has acknowledged it is struggling with significant shortfalls in recruitment and retention of medical personnel for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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.