



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### RESEARCHERS SEE NO PROBLEMS WHEN U.S. TROOPS FIGHT WITH GAY-FRIENDLY BRITISH

#### Zero Impact Seen on Combat Capabilities

SANTA BARBARA, CA, May 14, 2003 - Top military analysts this week evaluated the impact of coalition fighting in Iraq among military forces with conflicting policies on gay troops. In interviews conducted by the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military (CSSMM), a think tank at the University of California, Santa Barbara, combat experts described the nature of joint operations by coalition forces. Their comments suggested that when U.S. units-which ban openly gay soldiers for fear of undermining unit cohesion-fight with British units which allow gay soldiers, there is no adverse impact on military effectiveness.

Lt. Gen. Gregory S. Newbold, a vice president at the Potomac Institute, said there were instances in the war in Iraq when U.S. and British forces exchanged personnel. In coalition fighting, he explained, the two different armies might provide fire support, air defense, tanks or logistics for one other, as well as translator capabilities and other non-combatant support.

For coalition fighting, the two forces must train together before going into combat. "If you're going to provide combat forces [for each other,]" he explained, "you would absolutely want to train together, and generally we do that." He added that American and British forces "have trained together a great deal, so that relationship is a very easy one to carry into combat."

One of the first American casualties of the Iraqi war was an "exchange officer" who was flying in a Royal Navy Sea King helicopter when it collided with another Sea King over the Persian Gulf. The officer, Thomas Mullen Adams, 27, was part of an exchange program in which American and British forces send soldiers to fly with one another as a way of sharing tactical information. Glenn Truitt, a classmate of Adams' from the Naval Academy and a former submarine officer, said such exchange programs have been in place since World War II. He explained that their purpose is "to make sure we all have the best information" about air tactics, which are constantly being refined and developed.

Mr. Truitt said it was no surprise to him that American soldiers could work effectively with the gay-friendly British military. As a submarine officer, he knew of gay soldiers on his command, and he said



their professionalism rose to even higher levels than that of straight soldiers. "The homosexual men I knew in the military were much more professional about their sexuality than the heterosexuals," he said, "if only because they had to be" to gain full acceptance.

Maj. Gen. Bill Nash (Ret.), a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, stressed that concerns about the presence of female and openly gay soldiers in fighting units arose less during actual combat than in training. "Most of the issues about women and gays take place when the bullets aren't flying," he said. "When you're fighting, you've got other things on your mind."

His comments seemed to imply that the integration of female and openly gay soldiers into fighting units did not relate to combat performance, but reflected more generalized social concerns: "There are a lot of disciplinary issues that, unless they are directly related to combat performance, are not addressed on the battlefield."

In Congress, U.S. Rep. Martin Meehan, a Massachusetts Democrat, viewed the success of coalition fighting as further proof that allowing known gays to serve in the military does not compromise combat performance. "The adherents to the ban have never been able to produce any evidence that allowing gay men and lesbians to serve openly and honorably would harm the effectiveness of our military," said Meehan, a senior member of the House Armed Services Committee and a leading critic of the military's gay ban. "The Iraq war demonstrates that the morale and cohesion of our forces is simply not affected by the presence of openly gay soldiers."

According to Aaron Belkin, CSSMM's director, twenty-three other nations besides Britain allow gays to serve openly. CSSMM has published extensive studies on four of them: Britain, Israel, Australia and Canada. Researchers concluded that lifting the gay ban had no significant impact on combat capabilities. "The fact that U.S. troops fought successfully right next to British service members who are openly gay and lesbian shows that lifting a gay ban does not undermine military performance," he said.

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 Council on Foreign Relations, 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.