



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Indra Lusero, Assistant Director, 303-902-9402, [indralusero@palmcenter.ucsb.edu](mailto:indralusero@palmcenter.ucsb.edu)

**STUDY FINDS GAYS DO NOT UNDERMINE ISRAELI MILITARY PERFORMANCE**

28 June 2000 — SANTA BARBARA. A new 48-page study of gays and lesbians in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has found that after Israel's 1993 decision to allow homosexuals to serve openly in its armed forces, military performance did not decline.

The study was written by Aaron Belkin and Melissa Levitt. Belkin is Director of the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Levitt is Doctoral Candidate in Political Science at CUNY and Director of ELM Research Associates, a non-partisan research firm in Berkeley.

In 1983, the IDF adopted regulations that allowed homosexuals to serve in the military. Gays and lesbians were, however, prohibited from serving in intelligence positions and made to undergo psychological tests. In 1993, the IDF repealed the security restrictions against gays and lesbians and allowed them to serve on an equal basis with heterosexuals.

This study is the most comprehensive analysis in English of homosexuality in the IDF and reflects an exhaustive inventory of data and research. Its title is "The Effects of Including Gay and Lesbian Soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces: Appraising the Evidence".

Key findings are as follows:

- \* There is no evidence that the inclusion of homosexuals in the IDF has harmed operational effectiveness, combat readiness, unit cohesion, or morale in the Israeli military. In a security-conscious nation, this is simply not a concern among military personnel or the public more generally.
- \* Contrary to the claims of some American experts, some Israeli soldiers in combat units do come out of the closet. Even in these cases, Israeli officials report no deterioration of unit cohesion or performance.
- \* Security and mental health officials for the IDF have found that sexual minorities adapt to military life as well as heterosexuals. Scholars studying the issue have also determined that gay combat soldiers adopt similar methods of adjusting to military life as their heterosexual colleagues. Homosexuality appears to be peripheral to these soldiers' preoccupations, and they reveal few problems associated with their sexual orientation.