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**SUMMIT ANNOUNCED ON GAY SERVICE IN FOREIGN MILITARIES
NATO and Israeli Military Officials to Discuss Implementation**

SANTA BARBARA, CA, February 8, 2010 – The Palm Center has announced plans to convene a Washington, D.C. summit of officials and experts from military forces that allow gay men and lesbians to serve openly, including the Israel Defense Force and NATO member militaries. The summit, which is planned for early spring, will focus on the implementation of personnel policies for openly gay troops. British and Israeli experts have confirmed their participation.

“As military and political leaders anticipate the end of ‘don’t ask, don’t tell,’ the lessons from the twenty-five foreign forces that allow open gay service are instructive,” stated Dr. Aaron Belkin, Director of the Palm Center. Belkin cited three questions that generally dominate the comparison: Did the decision to allow open gay service undermine military readiness? How was implementation managed? To what extent can lessons from abroad help U.S. officials plan for an inclusive policy?

In 1993, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) submitted a report to Congress regarding gays and lesbians in foreign militaries. It assessed the impact of open service on military readiness, finding that “Military officials in all four countries said that the presence of homosexuals in the military is not an issue and has not created problems in the functioning of military units.” A 1993 report by the RAND Corporation reached a similar conclusion.

During last week’s Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on “don’t ask, don’t tell,” Maine Senator Susan Collins asked if any NATO partners had reported difficulties since their implementation of open service. Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said he had spoken to many NATO allies and they reported “no impact” on military performance.

Palm Center scholars have published several journal articles and book chapters on gays and lesbians in the Israeli, British, Canadian and Australian Forces. A 2000 Palm Center conference at the Commonwealth Club included officials and experts from a number of foreign militaries that allow gay men and lesbians to serve openly.

Next week, the Palm Center plans to release a new, 150-page study on the status of gays and lesbians in foreign military forces around the world. The study will include the first-ever in-depth analysis of gays and lesbians in



the South African Defence Force, which dropped its ban in 1998.

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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.