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Contact: Indra Lusero, Assistant Director, 303-902-9402, indralusero@palmcenter.ucsb.edu

TRANSGENDER TROOPS FACE DISCRIMINATION Palm Center Publishes Analysis of Veterans Organization Data

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SANTA BARBARA, August 21, 2008 – New figures released today by the Transgender American Veterans Association reveal that transgender service members and veterans, like many transgender people in the U.S., face a variety of forms of discrimination based on their transgender status. The survey of 827 U.S. military veterans and active-duty personnel mark the first major empirical findings on transgender people in the military.

A Palm Center analysis of the data, also released today, showed that over a third of survey respondents reported having experienced some form of discrimination in the workplace and 10% of respondents were turned away from the VA due to being transgender, while many reported other forms of discrimination including lack of respect from VA doctors (22%), non-medical staff (21%), and nurses (13%). In addition, among those who served under the “don’t ask, don’t tell policy,” 1 in 5 were questioned by an officer about their sexual orientation, a violation of the military’s DADT policy. Nearly two thirds reported there were suspicions about their sexual identity. Pre-transition transmen were twice as likely pre-transition transwomen to report suspicions about their sexual identity.

Dr. Jeanne Scheper, Research Director of the Palm Center, a think tank at University of California, Santa Barbara that studies sexual minorities in the military, said that “the survey adds to the growing evidence that the impact of the military’s ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy varies by gender,” and corroborates recent pentagon data that show women are disproportionately affected by the ban on openly gay service. “More research is needed,” she added, “to understand the full impact of the policy on all members of the military,” but she said that the existence of the policy itself makes that almost impossible.

The Palm Center analysis, “Transgender People in the U.S. Military: Summary and Analysis of the 2008 Transgender American Veterans Association Survey,” was conducted by researchers Karl Bryant, Ph.D. and Kristen Schilt, Ph.D. It details the findings of the survey on issues including Veterans’ access to healthcare and experiences of workplace discrimination, both within and outside the military.



For information on the TAVA survey, contact Monica Helms, President, at president@tavausa.org or Denny Meyer, Media Relations, at media@tavausa.org or call 718-849-5665.