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TWO DOZEN EXPERTS CONCERNED ABOUT CIVILIAN CONTROL OF MILITARY
Statement Questions Excessive Deference to Military on Gay Troops

SANTA BARBARA, CA, March 3, 2010—[Stars and Stripes](#) is reporting today that a prominent group of experts on civil-military relations has signed a [statement](#) raising concerns about civilian control of the military in the debate over “don’t ask, don’t tell.” The twenty-five signatories suggest that civilian leaders may be too willing to accept information about “don’t ask, don’t tell” from the Pentagon at face value, even when that information has no basis in substantive evidence.

The group includes professors at military universities and some of the top experts on civil-military relations in the nation. The statement was put together by the Palm Center at the University of California, Santa Barbara. “What’s at stake in the conversation about ‘don’t ask, don’t tell,’” said Professor Aaron Belkin, Palm’s Director, “is more than just equal treatment, but the broader question of civilian control of the military. When civilian leaders accept military advice that is not based on evidence, that’s not civilian control, which is a basic tenet of our democracy.”

Belkin was referring to recent claims by Pentagon brass that there is little data to assess what will happen when the gay ban is lifted, that the transition to an inclusive policy will be disruptive, and that the Pentagon is too busy fighting wars to manage that transition. Professor Michael Sherry of Northwestern University, one of the signatories of the statement, said “those who oppose making this change because the nation is at war were the same people who opposed it in 1993, when we were at peace.”

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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.