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### **WHITE HOUSE SETS RECORD STRAIGHT ON GAY BAN Insists It Remains Committed to Repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”**

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SANTA BARBARA, CA, May 12, 2009 – Asked today if the White House would consider halting gay discharges by presidential authority, press secretary Robert Gibbs said it would not stop the firing of gay troops. That said, Gibbs insisted that the President believes that the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy “isn’t working for our national interests” and that he “will work with the Joints Chiefs of Staff, the administration and with Congress” to change the policy.

In recent weeks, the President’s national security team has sent mixed messages. Defense Secretary Robert Gates spoke of what action would occur “if” the policy were repealed, suggesting it may not be; and national security advisor James Jones said this weekend he was not sure if the ban would be lifted.

Scholars said that Gibbs’s comments today indicate new leadership from the White House in reassuring the public that “don’t ask, don’t tell” will be repealed. Nathaniel Frank, senior research fellow at the Palm Center, said that “today’s remarks appear to send a signal to any member of the administration who questions the President’s resolve.”

At the same time, Gibbs’s statement raised questions by gay rights experts about why President Obama, who continues to say he wants the ban terminated, would preside over ongoing discharges when he has authority to end them by executive order. The Palm Center yesterday released a report by a team of scholars and legal experts showing that the president has statutory authority to halt discharges immediately.

Richard Socarides, who worked in the Clinton administration as special assistant to the president on LGBT issues, said that the current president should exercise the short-term options he has to end the ban. “I have long supported and advocated a moratorium on further discharges,” he said today, “and I



think it's well within the president's discretionary authority to do that immediately." Socarides said an executive order halting discharges would be consistent with Obama's stated belief that the policy should end.

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The Palm Center is a research institute at the University of California, Santa Barbara. The Center uses rigorous social science to inform public discussions of controversial social issues, enabling policy outcomes to be informed more by evidence than by emotion. Its data-driven approach is premised on the notion that the public makes wise choices on social issues when high-quality information is available. For more information, visit [www.palmcenter.ucsb.edu](http://www.palmcenter.ucsb.edu).