



# THE MICHAEL D. PALM CENTER

BLUEPRINTS FOR SOUND PUBLIC POLICY

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## PALM CENTER IDENTIFIES MORE ARABIC LINGUISTS FIRED UNDER DADT

On May 23, 2007 the Associated Press, following a tip from the Palm Center, disclosed that several more Arabic linguists had been fired by the military under 'don't ask, don't tell.'

In October 2006, the Army Inspector General conducted an audit of a government communications system and investigated seventy service members for sending personal messages. Stephen Benjamin, a Cryptologic interpreter, responsible for collecting and analyzing signals and assigned targets to support combatant commanders and other tactical units, said he was called in for questioning and was asked about a comment he made in which he said, "That was so gay -- the good gay, not the bad one."

Some of the violations of the government computer system involved heterosexuals having cyber sex on the system; but, only the gay linguists were fired. Dr. Nathaniel Frank, senior research fellow at the Palm Center, said the loss of people like Benjamin highlights the hidden costs of the current gay exclusion policy "The reality is that surviving combat, working efficiently, and bonding with peers are all dependent on this human element of military life, where people talk about their lives with one another. It's hard to see how cybersex on a government communications network is not considered a career-ending offense, while mentioning that you had a date last week is such a large threat to unit cohesion that the individual must be fired."

When he was discharged, Benjamin was preparing to re-enlist for another six years. Under 'don't ask, don't tell,' the military has fired at least fifty-eight Arabic linguists to date.

## FORMER SENATOR BOB BARR CALLS FOR REPEAL OF DADT

Former Republican Congressman Bob Barr published an op-ed in the June 13, 2007 *Wall Street Journal* calling for the repeal of 'don't ask, don't tell.' Barr, who was a member of Congress from 1995 to 2003, opposes same-sex marriage as well as efforts to classify gays and lesbians as members of a constitutionally protected minority class. On the gays-in-the-military issue, however, Barr's feels differently. In the *Wall Street Journal* op-ed, he argued that allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly in the military would be consistent with conservative values such as saving money, promoting national security, and preserving individual privacy. According to Dr. Aaron Belkin, Director of the Michael D. Palm Center, "Many Republicans agree with Barr's argument, but few party leaders have been willing to say so in public." For instance, Gallup has reported that a majority of Republicans support allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly in the military. Barr told Palm Center researchers that his support reflects a growing body of evidence which shows that the ban is detrimental to military effectiveness.

## PALM CENTER RELEASES STUDY ON GENDER IDENTITY IN THE U.S. MILITARY

"Gender Identity and the Military - Transgender, Transsexual, and Intersex-identified Individuals in the U.S. Armed Forces," by Tarynn M. Witten, Executive Director and Senior Fellow at the TranScience Research Institute in Richmond, Virginia was commissioned by the Palm Center, to further work in the field of sexual minorities and social policy. According to the study, the military operates under an assumption that producing combat-ready soldiers requires enforcing a binary understanding of the male and female body, which does not allow room for those who identify as non-traditionally gendered. The military's understanding and treatment of sexual minorities limits its capacity and willingness to work effectively with transgender, transsexual, or intersex-identified individuals. "This research is essential if our armed forces are to use every qualified individual who is willing and able to serve," said Dr. Aaron Belkin, Director of the Palm Center and a professor of political science at University of California, Santa Barbara. "The lives and capacities of nontraditionally-gendered individuals remain shrouded in stereotypes, and Witten's fresh research is a critical antidote to ignorance and misinformation."

## EVENTS

Senior Research Fellow, Dr. Nathaniel Frank was a featured speaker at the annual convention of the **National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association** from August 30 to September 2, 2007 in San Diego. NLGJA is an organization of journalists, media professionals, educators and students that works within the news industry to foster fair and accurate coverage of LGBT issues. The convention was attended by over 500 journalists and others who work on LGBT issues. The event consisted of three days of workshops, plenary sessions and networking events.



*Nathaniel Frank is pictured here to the left of the podium.*

Dr. Frank spoke before 150 people on a panel entitled "(Still Not) At Ease: Don't Ask, Don't Tell in 2007," which also featured recently retired and separated service members who served under the military's 'don't ask, don't tell' policy. The ensuing discussion frequently referenced research by the Michael D. Palm Center, including the 2006 Zogby poll of recently-retired veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Palm Center sponsored a panel on gender identity in the military at the **World Professional Association for Transgender Health** conference in Chicago, and provided financial support to the **Diversity**

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in the **Security Sector** conference, held in conjunction with Royal Military College of Canada, as well as the **International Symposium for Military Ethics** at the University of San Diego, School of Leadership and Education Sciences.

Aaron Belkin also made presentations on gays in the military at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, the Army War College, and the annual meetings of the American Psychological Association in San Francisco.

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## PALM CENTER IN THE NEWS

On September 1, 2007 the *Washington Post* published an op-ed by Aaron Belkin titled "A Sting He Didn't Deserve." Belkin argues that Senator Larry Craig was caught in a system that punishes minor gestures, a system that looks like the one that Craig himself helped create when he voted to enact 'don't ask, don't tell.'

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## FELLOWSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT NEWS

The Palm Center is proud to announce the following fellowships: **Jennifer Caldwell**, Ph.D. candidate in Theatre at the University of California, Santa Barbara, is doing research at the National Archives and Records Administration to study GI minstrel and variety show performer Peaches del Monte; **Kevin Wegener**, graduate student at Harvard School of Business, is doing research on the lives of LGBT servicemembers serving in the military since 9/11.

The Palm Center is honored to have received the following gifts: \$75,000 from the **Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund**; \$30,000 from the **Arcus Foundation**; \$20,000 from **Robert Abernethy**; \$20,000 from **Andrew Tobias and Charles Nolan**, \$20,000 from an anonymous donor; and \$2,000 from **Admiral Alan Steinman**. We are extremely grateful for the support.

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