

PALM CENTER

BLUEPRINTS FOR SOUND PUBLIC POLICY

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CONTACT: Kristofer Eisenla, [LUNA+EISENLA media](mailto:kristofer@lunaeisenlamedia.com)
kristofer@lunaeisenlamedia.com | 202-670-5747 (mobile)

Palm Center Concerned by Pentagon Delay on Transgender Ban *[New York Times Editorial](#) Presses DoD as [Palm Memo](#) Highlights 14 Studies Completed within Six Months*

SAN FRANCISCO, CA – The [Palm Center](#), an independent research center publishing state-of-the-art scholarship on transgender personnel in the military, questioned today whether the Pentagon’s promised six-month review of its transgender service ban is on track. Last July, Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter created a working group to study overturning the ban, calling the current discriminatory policy “outdated, confusing [and] inconsistent,” and saying that it “distracts commanders from our core missions.” He promised that the review would be completed in six months and would proceed “with the presumption that transgender persons can serve openly... unless and except where objective, practical impediments are identified.”

But despite the six-month timeline and research finding that transgender identity is not an impediment to service, no announcement has been made and no action taken after more than eight months. A [New York Times editorial](#) today calls on the Defense Secretary to unveil an inclusive policy “in a matter of weeks so transgender troops can start serving openly while he is in office.” The *Times* warns that with his inaction, Sec. Carter “runs the risk of leaving office with an unfulfilled promise” to allow transgender Americans to serve openly, which would “squander investments the military has made in highly skilled personnel” and “tarnish” his legacy. The editorial also reports that a RAND Corporation study commissioned by the Pentagon has already concluded that ending the transgender ban “would have minimal impact on the force” and that the “cost of providing transition-related care would be negligible.”

“Six months is more than enough time to study the implications of lifting the ban,” said Palm Center director, Aaron Belkin, a visiting professor at the University of California, Hastings, and a leading expert on the military’s ban on transgender service members. **“Thousands of currently serving transgender service members are in limbo waiting for action from the Pentagon, and are wondering what explains the delay.”**

The Palm Center released a [memo](#) today describing fourteen instances when the Pentagon completed complex reviews of key military policies in two to six months. They include assessments of the quality of health care treatment in military hospitals, a review of the military’s nuclear program, a study of US intelligence operations in Afghanistan, and inquiry into whether women should be assigned to combat positions. **“There is no reason it should take any longer to study openly transgender service than it took to assess US intelligence operations in Afghanistan,”** Belkin said.

Research by the Palm Center, other scholars and military officials has reached the same conclusions as RAND, finding that being transgender is not an impediment to military service, and that implementing inclusive policy would be straightforward. One Palm study, "[Report of the Planning Commission on Transgender Military Service](#)," concluded that establishing a transgender-inclusive policy would be "neither excessively complex nor burdensome."

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About The Palm Center:

The Palm Center is an independent research institute committed to sponsoring state-of-the-art scholarship to enhance the quality of public dialogue about critical and controversial issues of the day. Our research has been published in leading social scientific journals and extensively consulted and cited by the US military and others. The Palm Center seeks to be a resource for scholars, policymakers, journalists, opinion leaders, students and the public at large. For more information, visit us at www.palmcenter.org.