



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 13, 2015

CONTACT: Cindi Creager

CreagerCole Communications

t: 646.279.4559

[cindi@creagercole.com](mailto:cindi@creagercole.com)

## **TLDEF Renews Call for Open Transgender Military Service After Sgt. Shane Ortega Shares His Story With the Washington Post**

New York, NY- The Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund (TLDEF) reiterates its support for lifting the ban on open transgender military service after Shane Ortega, a transgender Army Sergeant, **shared his compelling story** in the Washington Post last week. Sgt. Ortega is an Army helicopter crew chief who serves in the the 25th Infantry Division at Wheeler Airfield in Oahu, Hawaii. He has served for the last 10 years in both the Marines and the Army, carrying out combat missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. He is now asking the military to allow him to serve openly as a man in all respects, challenging the outdated and discriminatory medical regulation that bars open military service by transgender people.

### **Statement from TLDEF Executive Director Michael Silverman**

“We commend Sgt. Shane Ortega for his unwavering service to our nation for the last decade and congratulate him for his courage in coming out publicly. Shane’s story makes it clear that it is time to end to the military’s discriminatory ban on open transgender military service.

“With more than 15,000 transgender service members currently serving in silence, TLDEF again urges the Defense Department to allow transgender people to serve our nation openly as the men and women they truly are. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter acknowledged last February when asked about open transgender military service: ‘I don’t think anything but their suitability for service should preclude them.’ We agree and will continue to speak out until this ban is lifted once and for all.

“Eighteen other countries have successfully allowed transgender people to serve openly, including our close allies Australia, Canada, England, and Israel. It is time for our military to lift the ban on transgender people serving our country as their true selves.”

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**About the Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund (TLDEF):** TLDEF is committed to ending discrimination based upon gender identity and expression and to achieving equality for transgender people through public education, test-case litigation, direct legal services, and public policy efforts. Read more at: <http://transgenderlegal.org>.