



NEWS RELEASE

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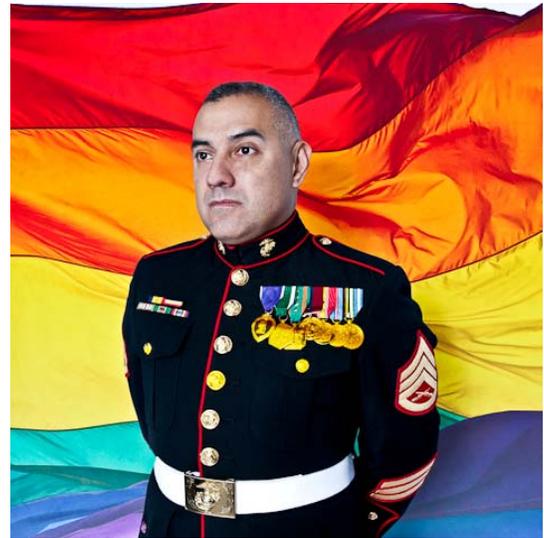
Iraq War Veteran Eric Alva Honored as Grand Marshal of 26th Annual Palm Springs Pride Celebration

(Palm Springs, CA – September 17, 2012) Greater Palm Springs Pride announced today that retired Staff Sergeant Eric Fidelis Alva, the first American soldier wounded in the Iraq War, will be honored as the 2012 grand marshal in the 26th annual Pride Parade, scheduled for 10:00 am, Sunday, November 4th, along Palm Canyon Drive through the heart of Downtown Palm Springs.

Alva is recognized as a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender civil rights activist and a national spokesman for the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”

“We are looking forward to honoring an American hero who actively spoke out and worked tirelessly for the repeal of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy and who was stationed at 29 Palms and attended his first Pride parade in Palm Springs. Eric is an inspiration,” stated Ron deHarte, Palm Springs Pride President.

“It’s fitting that as we mark the first full year that the policy known as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” was repealed by honoring a gay Marine who actively campaigned to enable other gay and lesbian members of the military to serve openly,” said deHarte. “This is a celebration of Eric, of American Servicemembers, and of all those involved in bringing an end to the discriminatory 17-year-old policy.”



Eric Alva

Staff Sergeant Alva the first Marine seriously injured in the Iraq War is the war’s first Purple Heart recipient. Retiring after 13 years of military service, Alva went back to college to finish his degree. While at school, he decided to be true to himself and help others, coming out as gay. On February 28, 2007, he joined Congressman Martin Meehan in introducing the Military Readiness “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy. With this step, he openly admitted to the military and the world that he is a gay man and one that had served and proudly sacrificed for his country. Alva took a courageous step towards fighting for the rights of LGBT Americans and, in particular, for those who have served and are serving in the military, but were unable to be true to themselves. His goal is to help achieve civil rights for all citizens of the United States.

After serving in Somalia during Operation Restore Hope, and ten years of being stationed in Japan and California, Alva was called upon to serve in the Iraq War. In January 2003, in the build-up to the war, Alva's unit, the 3rd Battalion 7th Marines, was deployed to the Middle East. His unit was among the first to cross the border of Kuwait into Iraq for the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Three hours into the ground war, near the city of Basra, his unit stopped to rest. While stepping out of his vehicle, Alva triggered a landmine. The violent explosion threw him 15 feet from the vehicle, and left him with a broken left leg; a torn open, severely nerve-damaged broken right arm; and a badly injured right leg that was later amputated.

Joining Alva will be two community grand marshals, an original member of Dykes on Bikes, director, producer and historian Glenne McElhinney along with one of the first out gay reporters in the country Hank Plante.

About the Pride Parade:

This year's pride parade will begin at 10:00 am on Sunday, November 4th. Step-off for more than 125 groups and 5,000 participants will take place E. Ramon Rd. and travels north on Palm Canyon Drive to Tachevah Dr. Seven reviewing stands will be positioned along the mile and a half parade route including the Deaf Pride reviewing stand with ASL interpretation at Amado and N. Palm Canyon Dr.

For information regarding Palm Springs Pride and Pride Week 2012 events, please visit our website at www.pspride.org. Follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/PalmSprings.Pride.

About Greater Palm Springs Pride:

Greater Palm Springs Pride (pspride.org) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit community enhancement organization founded to promote the public education and public awareness of individual rights and civil liberties of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community and to promote the history, diversity and future prosperity of the Greater Palm Springs LGBT community.

This year's Pride celebration theme is: "Long May it Wave!" For information about upcoming events and volunteer opportunities visit the web site at: PSPride.org. The 2012 Palm Springs Pride Celebration is October 29 - November 4.

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