

DEOMI News Highlights

DEOMI News Highlights is a weekly compilation of published items and commentary with a focus on equal opportunity, equal employment opportunity, diversity, culture, and human relations issues. DEOMI News Highlights is also a management tool intended to serve the informational needs of equity professionals and senior DOD officials in the continuing assessment of defense policies, programs, and actions. Further reproduction or redistribution for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions.

Army explores predicting suicides as a way to prevent them [Gregg Zoroya, *The Army Times*, 5 October 2013]

- The Army now stands at the edge of a science-driven answer as radical as it is uncomplicated—predicting which soldiers are likely to kill themselves so they can be stopped before it's too late. Developed by the National Institute of Mental Health with colleagues at Harvard University and other academic institutions, the assessment code is part of a broader study of suicide lasting several years and costing \$65 million.
- The Army is meeting the new tool with a combination of enthusiasm and caution. Uniformed leaders are wary, concerned about substituting computer logic for a commander's own ideas about which soldiers need help. Advocates say it is desperately needed as suicides among active-duty military and veterans reach record levels.
- How soon the program will be put in place is unclear, with leaders talking about a pilot program possibly next spring.

[Army explores predicting suicides as a way to prevent them](#)

Army's only enlisted Sikh soldier earns rare promotion at JBLM [Adam Ashton, *Tacoma News Tribune*, 27 September 2013]

- The Army promoted Simranpreet Lamba, one of a handful of Sikhs serving in the Army across the active-duty and reserve forces, from specialist to corporal, making him the first Sikh to earn that rank in more than 30 years.
- Each current Sikh soldier had to gain an exemption allowing him to serve despite Army policies dating back to 1984 that require soldiers to shave, keep short hair, and wear standard berets. Those rules prevented Sikhs from enlisting for decades.
- About 200,000 to 500,000 Sikhs live in the U.S., according to estimates from the Pew Research Center. Lamba hopes his promotion will show “there's nothing about being Sikh, about our turban and our beard, that can stop us from excelling in the Army.”

[Army's only enlisted Sikh soldier earns rare promotion at JBLM](#)

Sexual harassment, assault more likely for deployed women who saw 'combat' [Wyatt Olson, *Stars and Stripes*, 30 September 2013]

- Deployed women who underwent “combat-like” experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan are much more likely to report sexual harassment and sexual assault compared with other deployed women, according to a new study.
- Published in the August edition of *Women's Health Issues* journal, the study used data from more than 13,000 military women who have been tracked in the Millennium Cohort Study, which began in 2001.
- Cynthia LeardMann, a researcher with the Naval Health Research Center in San Diego who co-authored the journal article, said the study increases data “about where we can specifically help provide interventions and prevention programs” so the military can “target certain environments, as well as, perhaps, certain service branches.”

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Culture

Gobble tov! American Jews ready for Thanksgivukkah

By Leanne Italie, Associated Press

Minneapolis Tribune, October 8, 2013

NEW YORK — It's a turkey. It's a menorah. It's Thanksgivukkah!



An extremely rare convergence this year of Thanksgiving and the start of Hanukkah has created a frenzy of Talmudic proportions.

There's the number crunching: The last time it happened was 1888, or at least the last time since Thanksgiving was declared a federal holiday by President Lincoln, and the next time may have Jews lighting their candles from spaceships 79,043 years from now, by one calculation.

There's the commerce: A 9-year-old New York boy invented the "Menurkey" and raised more than \$48,000 on Kickstarter for his already trademarked, Turkey-shaped menorah. Woodstock-inspired T-shirts have a turkey perched on the neck of a guitar and implore "8 Days of Light, Liberty & Latkes." The creators nabbed the trademark to "Thanksgivukkah."

Songs have popped up with lyrics like these from "The Ballad of Thanksgivukkah": "Imagine Judah Maccabee, sitting down to roast turkey and passing the potatoes to Squanto ..." Rabbi David Paskin, the song's co-writer and co-head of the Kehillah Schechter Academy in Norwood, Mass., proudly declares his the Jewish day school nearest Plymouth Rock.

Let's not forget the food mash-ups commemorating the staying power of the Pilgrims and the fighting prowess of the Jews, along with the miracle of one night's oil lasting eight days. Pumpkin latkes, apple-cranberry sauce and deep-fried turkey, anyone?

"It's pretty amazing to me that in this country we can have rich secular and rich religious celebrations and that those of us who live in both worlds can find moments when they meet and can really celebrate that convergence. There are a lot of places in the world where we would not be able to do that," Paskin said.

The lunisolar nature of the Jewish calendar makes Hanukkah and other religious observances appear to drift slightly from year to year when compared to the U.S., or Gregorian, calendar. But much of the intrigue over Hanukkah this year is buried deep in the history of Thanksgiving itself, which hasn't always been fixed in the same spot. That caused some initial confusion over Thanksgivukkah, aka Turkukkah.

In 1863, Lincoln declared Thanksgiving as the last Thursday in November (the month sometimes has five of those) and the holiday remained there until President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a joint resolution of Congress fixing it as the fourth Thursday, starting in 1942.

Jewish practice calls for the first candle of eight-day Hanukkah to be lit the night before Thanksgiving Day this year, so technically Thanksgivukkah falls on the "second candle" night.

And then there's Texas. Before 1863, each state decided on its own date for Thanksgiving. As late as 1956, Texans were still chowing down on turkey and stuffing a week later than everyone else, according to a history put together by Chabad.org of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement of Hasidic Jews. That means Jews in that state might have also been lighting their first Hanukkah candle in 1945 and 1956.

There's more early Thanksgiving lore and 2,000 years of calendar tinkering involving the Jewish calendar, but we'll spare you.

Jonathan Mizrahi, a quantum physicist at Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, N.M., puzzled on the convergence last January, in a blog post with buzzed-about line graphs picked up by others online. More than 100,000 people have visited the blog since then, he said, including some who questioned his calculations and prompted him to post a couple of clarifications.

<http://www.startribune.com/lifestyle/226767571.html>

He hadn't made it clear that he was referring to the "second candle" night of Hanukkah, and he hadn't realized Thanksgiving had shifted from the last to the fourth Thursday of November.

The interest, Mizrahi said, "has truly blown me away. I've just been totally flabbergasted at the number of responses."

While the whole thing is lots of fun, is there anything truly cosmic happening here?

Well, there's Comet ISON, which is scheduled to pass close by the sun on Thanksgiving this year and may provide a nice show — possibly even during daylight. Or not, since comets can't always be counted on.

Mom-of-two Dana Gitell, who lives outside Boston, partnered with an artist and the Jewish gift site Moderntribe to create and sell souvenir T-shirts, cards and a poster. She sees a happy and meaningful coincidence and 10 percent of proceeds will go to Mazon, a Jewish hunger relief organization.

"Cosmic? It's just a day when Jews and the rest of America are celebrating on the same day," she said. "It's an opportunity for us to really celebrate the Jewish American experience, and to give thanks in America for the religious freedom we enjoy here, and for making the Jewish American experience possible."

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Discrimination

Gay couples in military having trouble getting leave to get married

By David S. Cloud, Washington Bureau
Los Angeles Times, October 2, 2013

WASHINGTON — Gays and lesbians in the military are running into widespread obstacles as they seek to take advantage of a new Obama administration policy designed to make it easier for same-sex couples in the armed services to get married.

The policy, announced with great fanfare at the Pentagon in mid-August, was meant to give same-sex couples up to 10 days special leave to get married in the 13 states that allow it — and thus equal access to low-cost healthcare, base shopping and other benefits available to married couples in the military.

But implementation of the policy has caused widespread confusion. Only the Marines have issued final guidelines to their ranks on the new leave. The Army and Navy put out interim directives and are still working on final versions, while the Air Force has yet to even issue any instructions on granting the time off.

The uncertainty illustrates the sweeping changes that the military is grappling with since the Obama administration and Congress lifted the ban on gays and lesbians serving openly in 2012 and the Supreme Court struck down the Defense of Marriage Act in June, which allowed the Pentagon to offer the same-sex couples the same benefits as other military families.

The frustrations are palpable for soldiers such as Spc. Jodie Harper, an Ohio National Guard member and Army supply clerk stationed in Kuwait. When he heard about the new policy, he immediately applied for 10 days leave to wed his longtime male companion, Craig Roberts, in Washington, D.C., where gay marriage is legal.

With Harper on a nine-month deployment and Roberts in school and working two jobs, the couple is struggling to make ends meet. Once married, Roberts could register for federal benefits available to spouses of other National Guard troops, including military healthcare, tuition assistance and payments to help defray housing expenses. But Harper's battalion commander, Lt. Col. Mark Raaker, refused, saying only emergency leave was being granted. "He said if leave is granted for me to be married then it's not fair to heterosexuals," Harper said.

Raaker did not respond to a request for an interview. Col. Bryan Hilferty, a spokesman for the Army in Kuwait, said: "Deployed soldiers, because they are in support of the war effort, are only authorized leave in emergencies such as the death or serious illness of an immediate family member."

In interviews, half a dozen military members also said their applications had been rejected, and for widely varying reasons. In some cases, commanders said they could not be spared time off. In others, officers were unaware of the new policy or said the procedures had not been finalized.

In still other cases, gay and lesbian soldiers have been approved for leave to get married — while other soldiers in similar circumstances have seen their applications denied. Asked why some soldiers have received the leave and others have not, an Army spokesman, Lt. Col Justin Platt, said the Army "will issue additional guidance clarifying the policy in the coming weeks."

When he announced the policy, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said the goal was to "help level the playing field" for same-sex couples. They could be granted leave to travel to states that permit same-sex marriage, and thus qualify for benefits as available to married couples in the military. The leave would be "effective immediately," according to an Aug. 13 Pentagon memo.

The policy sought to address a conundrum for the Pentagon: Though same-sex couples can now legally get benefits under federal law, many are stationed in states or countries where it is against the law to marry their partner. To rectify that, members of the military stationed more than 100 miles from a jurisdiction where they can marry were promised up to seven days off if they were in the continental United States and up to 10 days leave if they were overseas.

<http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-military-same-sex-20131002,0,4934740.story>

But the fine print of the policy memo gave commanders discretion about whether to approve the time off — an exception that critics say has led to foot-dragging and arbitrary refusals. Nor, Pentagon officials now say, is the leave available to troops deployed in Kuwait, Afghanistan and other bases in the Middle East that the Pentagon uses to support the war in Afghanistan.

"It does make the order a little hollow," said Chris Rowzee, a retired Army National Guard officer and an advocate for equal same-sex benefits. "We would hope that no commander would have any discriminatory reasons for saying no. But we can't know what's in their hearts."

An enlisted female in the Air Force stationed at Keesler Air Force Base in Mississippi, who asked that her name not be used for fear of reprisal, said she asked for the leave earlier this month but was told authorization to grant the time off hadn't "trickled down" yet. She used personal leave to go to New York to get married, and her spouse successfully registered for benefits on the base after the couple returned. Even so, she said: "Let's say I married a man, I'm sure I wouldn't be having any of these holdups."

Capt. Amanda Wonder, an Air Force nurse in Texas, said her commander had not heard of the new policy when Wonder asked for time off earlier this month to get married. Since her wedding is not scheduled until January, she hopes she will be approved before then.

In contrast, Army Spc. April Smith, who is stationed in Hawaii, said her superiors promptly approved 10 days leave for her to go to San Diego earlier this month to marry her partner.

Lt. Sheila McCabe, an Army air defense officer deployed to Kuwait, said her application to go home to get married was turned down by her battalion commander, who said he had never heard of the new leave policy. She says he told her she could take personal leave to go home.

McCabe said "many people" in her unit "had commented negatively" since the Pentagon announced the policy. "I actually have been told that 'your situation shouldn't make you special,'" she said.

Diversity

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20130929931797.html> or

<http://www.thenewstribune.com/2013/09/28/2809640/sikh-earns-rare-promotion-to-corporal.html>

Army's only enlisted Sikh soldier earns rare promotion at JBLM

By Adam Ashton

Tacoma News Tribune, September 27, 2013

Simranpreet Lamba stands out when he lines up with his fellow soldiers in his Joint Base Lewis-McChord cavalry troop. He's the bearded one wearing the camouflage turban.

As the Army's only enlisted Sikh soldier, Lamba, 29, feels the pressure to prove himself so others of his faith can put on a uniform and serve their country. He took a step toward that goal Friday when the Army promoted him to corporal, making him the first Sikh to earn that rank in more than 30 years.



"I kind of think all my hard work has paid off," said Lamba, whose enlistment in 2009 triggered a 10-month review in which Army officials considered whether he could serve while sporting the articles of his faith — a turban, uncut hair and a beard.

He's one of a handful of Sikhs serving in the Army across the active-duty and Reserve forces, according to the New York-based Sikh Coalition. Two of the others are in the medical field as officers, one a dentist and one a doctor.

Each current Sikh soldier had to gain an exemption allowing him to serve despite Army policies dating back to 1984 that require soldiers to shave, keep short hair and wear standard berets. Those

rules prevented Sikhs from enlisting for decades.

They hail from a 500-year-old religion with roots in India's Punjab Region. About 200,000 to 500,000 Sikhs live in the U.S., according to estimates from the Pew Research Center. Lamba hopes his promotion will show "there's nothing about being Sikh, about our turban and our beard that can stop us from excelling in the Army," he said.

He enlisted through a military program that recruits foreigners with special skills and offers them a path to citizenship. Lamba, who has become a naturalized U.S. citizen, speaks Urdu, Hindi and Punjabi — languages vital to communication with the people of India and Pakistan.

He adapted his faith to his military service with a little creativity. He fashioned his camouflage turban by buying a sheet of cloth and cutting it to fit his needs. A Velcro patch on the front shows his rank, similar to how Army caps appear. He has another turban that fits under his combat helmet, and he has found a way to firmly fix a gas mask to his face by applying petroleum jelly to his beard.

He moved to America from New Delhi in 2006 and found his way to the Army after he earned a master's degree in industrial engineering from New York University. He said he always wanted to serve his country in uniform. Enlisting let him fulfill that dream.

His promotion from specialist to corporal was a lateral move, but it signifies that he's doing well and is on a path to becoming a sergeant. He'd be the first Sikh sergeant in decades if he earned that rank. "Every time he gets promoted, he's going to be a first," said his commanding officer, Capt. Craig Morehead.

Lamba's hitting his stride as a medic in the 3rd Squadron, 38th Cavalry Regiment at Lewis-McChord. It's part of the base's intelligence-gathering 201st Battlefield Surveillance Brigade.

"He's very driven in everything he does," said Sgt. 1st Class Edgar Baeza. "He's always asking for more responsibilities." Baeza heard about Lamba before they met. The Sikh soldier has been featured in stories published by The New York Times, The Associated Press and Army Times.

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20130929931797.html> or

<http://www.thenewstribune.com/2013/09/28/2809640/sikh-earns-rare-promotion-to-corporal.html>

“I was pretty excited when I found out he was going to be in my unit,” Baeza said. Lamba “has taught us a lot about his culture and upbringing.” Lamba and his wife, Guneet, live in University Place. She notices he often brings his work home with him.

“He’s really a very hard worker,” she said. At bedtime, he’s always talking about what he needs to accomplish the next day, she said. Lamba received a line of handshakes and hugs from his fellow soldiers after he received his new rank. “I really look forward to a long career in the Army,” he told them.

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20130929931743.html> or
<http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2013/sep/27/marines-women-combat-foreign/>

Marines study foreign women in combat

By Gretel C. Kovach

UTSanDiego, September 27, 2013

As the Marine Corps weighs whether to open the infantry to women, the service is studying how other countries approach the issue of female troops in direct ground combat.

The armed forces are under orders to integrate women into all military jobs by 2016 or justify why an exception should be granted. In January, the Defense Department rescinded its 1994 policy keeping female troops out of ground combat jobs, as it opened air combat and most warships to women.

Nations that currently have women serving in the infantry or other direct ground combat jobs include Canada, New Zealand, Israel, Denmark, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Norway, and as of this year, Australia.

Britain, No

A key U.S. ally who doesn't is the United Kingdom, which decided after a 2010 study to keep restrictions against women in direct ground combat. About 9 percent of the British armed forces is female. Some would be able to perform to standard physically and psychologically but mixing genders in close-combat teams could have "far reaching and grave consequences," the Ministry of Defense concluded.

"Under the conditions of high-intensity close-quarter battle, team cohesion becomes of much greater importance," according to the British study, which raised concerns about the potential for male troops to pay undue attention to wounded females.

In January when the U.S. ended its ban on women in ground combat jobs, British officials said there were "no plans for a further immediate review" of its policy.

Australia, Yes

Australia, which has been working closely with U.S. Marines to develop an amphibious assault fleet, opened all combat jobs to women in January.

One female officer has finished the first two modules of Australia's Regimental Officer Basic Course, which is the equivalent of the U.S. Marine Corps' Infantry Officer Course at Quantico, Va. Another female lieutenant is preparing to begin the training soon, according to U.S. Marine Corps personnel on the research team for women in combat service.

Australia prepared for the change for five years before opening the ground combat arms to women. It plans to finish integrating women into those jobs by 2016. At last count the country also had two armor officers, two artillery officers, 19 enlisted artillery and three enlisted combat engineers who are women.

About 14 percent of Australia's 48,000 troops are female. The Royal Australian Navy has the highest percentage, 18.3 percent, and the Army has the smallest, 9.6 percent.

Israel, Sort of

Israel falls in a gray area. Women have served in Israel's military since the country was founded in 1948. Although waivers are available, most women are conscripted for two years of military service today, as opposed to three for men.

Israeli women do not serve in the regular infantry. But in 2000, "conceding to public pressures for the creation of an intensive combat unit for girls" Israel founded its Caracal (or Karakal) Battalion, according to the Israel Defense Forces web site.

Female volunteers who pass a strenuous course "identical to that of any other exclusively male battalion" serve on the same combat missions alongside men in the unit, which is named for a desert feline whose sexes are nearly indistinguishable.

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20130929931743.html> or

<http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2013/sep/27/marines-women-combat-foreign/>

“As part of the Southern Command, Caracal men and women secure the Egyptian border from smugglers, infiltrators, and terrorists,” the Israel Defense Forces said.

Friends of the Israel Defense Forces, a New York-based support group founded by Holocaust survivors, describes the unit as “an infantry combat battalion” and pioneer: “in that it is the first infantry battalion to incorporate women combat soldiers.”

The U.S. Marine Corps considers the Caracal Battalion, which patrols the Israel-Egyptian border, a “light infantry” unit responsible for policing and homeland security. However, an Israeli Army Women web page describes the Caracal Battalion as a “full capacity combat” unit. Other Army options for women interested in direct combat, as opposed to combat support or non-combat, include jobs in artillery, counterterrorism, field intelligence and attack dog handling.

Interest

Countries that have opened the infantry and other ground combat jobs to women find that few qualify or are interested in such grueling and violent assignments. About a third of Israel’s compulsory force of about 175,000 is female; compared with 3.3 percent of the combat arms, according to U.S. Marine research.

Canada ended gender-based job restrictions in 1989 after a national court decision, then spent a decade integrating its ground combat units. About 17 percent of Canada’s 39,000 troops are female, but less than 4 percent of personnel in the combat arms are women.

New Zealand passed a law in 2001 that opened all combat jobs to women. Four years later it reported that integration of women into combat fields “needed a deliberate and concerted effort,” but the change drove a societal shift that “values women as well as men.”

Human Relations

Army explores predicting suicides as a way to prevent them

By Gregg Zoroya

Army Times, October 5, 2013

Even as thousands of U.S. troops were dying in Iraq and Afghanistan during the 12 years of war following 9/11, about 3,000 perished by their own hand, nearly the same as the number of people lost on the day of those terrorist attacks.

Indeed, suicide is a perennial stain on the military that's growing worse each year, a trajectory baffling to military leaders and devastating to the thousands of shattered families left behind. "It just drives me crazy that we can't figure [it] out," said Army Deputy Undersecretary Thomas Hawley.

The Army, which recorded an average of six suicides per week last year, now stands at the edge of a science-driven answer as radical as it is uncomplicated — predicting which soldiers are likely to kill themselves so they can be stopped before it's too late. This form of health assessment is unlike anything in the civilian world and one that the Army is meeting with a combination of enthusiasm and caution.

It's also an idea that leaves Deborah Johnson wishing she could turn back time for the sake of her son, Jeremy. The 23-year-old Army private died from an overdose of pain pills mixed with alcohol in March 2010, shortly after an instant-message exchange with his mother. Jeremy was sent off to war in early 2009 six months after joining the Army. He was medically evacuated from Afghanistan with emotional issues in the summer of that year.

The father of two little girls was eager by 2010 to leave the service with a medical discharge, but he hated the medication doctors had him using. Shortly before his death, his mother says, he seemed severely depressed. But after hours on the phone followed by texting, Deborah Johnson thought he was OK. The death was ruled a suicide.

"You've got to find a way to identify those people that are at risk," she says, praising the new Army effort. "That would be every mother's hope — that there would be something that you could have done differently."

The Army received computer code over the past few months designed to do just that. Developed by the National Institute of Mental Health with colleagues at Harvard University and other academic institutions across the country, the code is part of a broader study of suicide lasting several years and costing \$65 million.

Advocates say it is desperately needed as suicides among active-duty military and veterans reach record levels. Researchers at the Department of Veterans Affairs estimate that 22 veterans die by suicide each day. "The reality is we've not had any meaningful impact over the course of the last decade [on military suicides]," said David Rudd, a suicide researcher and consultant to the Army on the new program. "We have to get outside the box."

Vice Chief of Staff Gen. John Campbell, the Army's second-highest ranking officer, says he has resources to help soldiers if he knows whom to go after. "If somebody comes up with something that says, 'Here's a way to narrow that focus,'" Campbell says, "we'd be crazy if we didn't go ahead and do that."

Scientists immersed in the project for years are excited by the prospects. "I mean, how many people can say they worked on something that actually saved lives?" says James Churchill, a program officer with the institute. National Institute epidemiologist Michael Schoenbaum, a lead scientist in the effort, says he and others on the team applied a complex set of risk factors — such as psychiatric illness, deployment history or drug or alcohol abuse — to a computer assessment of soldiers, producing a rating that's a "flag for whom do you target for special care." Hawley seems certain the program can work. "Suicide is a compelling human problem," he said. "In the Army, we [now] have the tools, the motivation, the funding to do something about this."

But uniformed leaders are wary, concerned about substituting computer logic — in the form of a list of names — for a commander's own ideas about which soldiers need help.

<http://www.armytimes.com/article/20131005/NEWS/310050008/Army-explores-predicting-suicides-way-prevent-them>

“I’m very cautious of lists,” said Lt. Gen. Howard Bromberg, the Army personnel chief who will decide how to use the data.

A rising toll

The number of suicides in the Army began rising sharply in 2005 — the rate tripling from 9.7 per 100,000 in 2004 to about 30 per 100,000 last year when 185 of the Army’s 550,000 active-duty soldiers killed themselves. Another 140 suicides occurred among soldiers not on active duty — members of the National Guard and Reserve.

The Pentagon says a commensurate civilian rate in 2010, the latest data available, was 25.1 suicides per 100,000 for males 17 to 60.

Army deaths — along with more recent spikes among sailors, airmen and Marines — drove suicide numbers among all troops to a record 351 in 2012, Pentagon data shows.

Suicides this year among active-duty soldiers are tracking about 20 percent below where they were at this point in 2012. But the deaths among Guard and reservists who are not on active duty — 60 percent of whom have deployed to war at one time or another in the past — have reached all-time highs in recent months, Army data shows.

As the numbers rose in 2009, then-Army Secretary Pete Geren launched the Study to Assess Risk and Resilience in Service Members in an effort to find out what had gone wrong for those choosing suicide. The Army contributed \$50 million, and the NIMH another \$15 million for what scientists now believe is the largest study ever done on suicide.

They culled through health, deployment and personnel records for soldiers who served from 2004 to 2009 — about 400,000 people — their names expunged from the data. Sifting for key risk factors, they identified smaller and smaller subgroups. Scientists found that the 16 percent of the force treated for mental health problems were responsible for nearly half of all suicides. The remaining 84 percent had a suicide rate closer to a traditional Army peacetime level of 12 per 100,000.

Using combinations of risk factors, scientists isolated 0.8 percent of the riskiest soldiers, responsible for 14 percent of all suicides. This group’s suicide rate was 358 per 100,000, nearly 30 times higher than the Army’s historical average, the data shows. Schoenbaum cautions that more than 99 percent of even the smallest group did not commit suicide — the event is that rare. Of the current population of soldiers, 0.8 percent is about 4,300 GIs.

How soon the program will be put in place is unclear, with leaders talking about a pilot program possibly next spring. “If you prevent 12 deaths,” said Hawley, “that’s a great thing.” “This is not designed,” Schoenbaum says, “to identify a unique individual, Pvt. Smith, who is a ticking time bomb. We don’t have anything like that crystal ball. We are trying to identify 5,000 Pvt. Smiths with a 30 times higher rate on average of killing themselves.”

First of its kind

Civilian industry officials specializing in employee health risk assessments say what the Army is working toward is different from anything they’ve seen. “In the work world that I know, there’s nothing with this kind of depth,” said Helen Darling, president and CEO of the National Business Group on Health, a nonprofit group that helps Fortune 100 companies improve health care and productivity.

Advocates for families of troops who have committed suicide worry about stigmatizing soldiers singled out by the computer program. The Army is already in the process of downsizing, leaving many soldiers anxious about the future and keeping their careers moving forward, said Kim Ruocco, a director at the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, a support organization for families of those who die in the military. “So this study is going to push some of those buttons,” she says.

Civilian suicide experts say that the Army and NIMH initiative is simply not good science in the absence of researchers subjecting their findings to peer review and testing their analysis over a period of years to see

<http://www.armytimes.com/article/20131005/NEWS/310050008/Army-explores-predicting-suicides-way-prevent-them>

whether it correctly predicts suicide. “In the world of science, you just violated every principle of how you validate an instrument,” says Lanny Berman, a psychologist and executive director of the American Association of Suicidology. “We might find a lower suicide rate, but can we prove somehow it’s related to this (suicide prediction program)? How are you going to know?”

Hawley is emphatic that this initiative can’t wait for validating protocols. “This is not an academic exercise,” he says. “This is a real-world effort for real soldiers.” Hawley and Bromberg say they are sensitive to concerns about stigmatizing any soldier singled out by the initiative. “We don’t want them to feel targeted,” Hawley says.

Once the computer identifies perhaps a few thousand soldiers at risk for suicide, the names would be provided to company commanders — more than likely an Army captain leading about 100 soldiers. “What we want the commander to do is bring them in and say, ‘First of all, we know you’re going through some challenges,’” Bromberg said, “Make the soldier feel at ease. That, ‘Hey, we’re not about putting you out of the Army. We’re not here about making you feel bad. But we’re going to help you.’” Mental health providers would then be alerted.

“It allows us to find a small, more manageable population ... who we know are at greater risk. And we can provide a more tailored approach to help support them,” said Lt. Col. Chris Ivany, a psychiatrist with the Army surgeon general’s office. “There is hope that this is going to bring something new to the fight,” Ivany said.

Mourning a son

Deborah Johnson said her son, Jeremy, had a radiant smile and upbeat personality that for months masked whatever demons haunted him on the inside. After his combat deployment to Afghanistan ended, after he began processing out of the Army with emotional problems and after some marital struggles, she said, she believes he began formulating a plan to die.

“When you get them to that point where they’re saying, ‘I’m having thoughts,’ then what are you going to do?” she asked. In his last days at Fort Benning, Ga., when Jeremy alternated between despair and plans for the future during long phone conversations with his mother, she thinks now it might have been almost too late to save him.

“That’s why I think these [computer] programs are great because you can get them before they’ve already got a plan and it’s hopeless,” she said. “If one person doesn’t commit suicide, then its worth it. ... Anything you can do to find that needle in the haystack.”

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20130930931827.html> or
<http://www.fayobserver.com/articles/2013/09/30/1285820?sac=fo.opinion>

Work doesn't stop with the end of Army Suicide Prevention Month

By Brig. Gen. Margaret Wilmoth

Fayetteville (NC) Observer, September 30, 2013

The United States Army remains the strength of our nation and has demonstrated remarkable skill and professionalism over the past 12 years of combat operations.

Nevertheless, the stress of military service, the resulting strain placed on relationships and families, combat-related injuries and illnesses have challenged our resiliency. Individual responses to these challenges often are manifested as risk behaviors, sometimes leading to thoughts or acts of suicide.

September has been Army Suicide Prevention Month. The Army Reserve is committed to cultivating a healthy and supportive climate as part of the Army's ongoing Ready and Resilient Campaign.

Some of our teammates will consider suicide as a viable option in response to stress and adversity. When we see indicators suggesting that our battle buddies are at risk, we must have the courage to intervene in a compassionate and responsible manner. Leaders at all levels must emphasize the importance of awareness, education and training as a way to increase the resiliency and strength of our soldiers, civilians and families.

During September, the Army Reserve continued to assess our units and engage in events and training designed to promote resiliency through education and awareness activities. Military OneSource, Employer Partnership of the Armed Forces, Yellow Ribbon and Comprehensive Soldier Fitness programs are all valuable resources for soldiers, civilians and families alike.

Suicide is one of the toughest enemies I face in the Army. It's an enemy that kills, and too often, we do not understand why. Effectively combating suicide will require all of us working together toward a common solution.

A sophisticated solution is aimed at helping individuals build resiliency and strengthen their life-coping skills. Ultimately, we want the mindset across our force and throughout society to be one emphasizing behavioral health as a routine part of what we do and who we are. Educating the force creates an environment where help-seeking behavior is encouraged and accepted as a sign of individual strength, courage and maturity.

We urge all soldiers, civilians, their families and their communities to work together to prevent suicide and to enhance individual and collective resilience and readiness through strong training programs. Our strength is at its greatest when we operate as a team.

This team also includes our employer partners, who help to alleviate financial stressors by hiring our soldiers in today's tough economy.

Resiliency doesn't mean that you can't acknowledge pain or you can't say you need help. Resiliency is about knowing enough about yourself to acknowledge you need help, and that's OK. Being resilient means you don't have to be bulletproof.

Brig. Gen. Margaret Wilmoth, Ph.D., R.N., is a professor in the school of nursing at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and the assistant for mobilization and reserve affairs at the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs. She is the first woman to command an Army Reserve medical brigade.

Miscellaneous

Democratic lawmakers among 200 arrested at immigration rally

By Becca Clemons

Los Angeles Times, October 8, 2013, 8:38 p.m

Democratic Congress members, labor leaders and immigration advocates are arrested at a protest outside the Capitol calling for the House to vote on immigration legislation.



U.S. Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.) is arrested outside the Capitol in Washington during a demonstration calling for the House to take up immigration overhaul legislation. (Drew Angerer / Getty Images / October 8, 2013)

WASHINGTON — Several members of Congress plus about 200 labor leaders and immigration advocates were arrested Tuesday outside the Capitol in a protest calling for the House to take up immigration reform, which stalled after passing the Senate.

Demonstrators marched to the Capitol after a rally and concert on the National Mall. Many stood or sat in the street in what organizers called a campaign of civil disobedience.

Democratic Reps. Charles B. Rangel and Joseph Crowley of New York, Raul M. Grijalva of Arizona, John Lewis of Georgia and Luis V. Gutierrez and Jan Schakowsky of Illinois were among those loaded into police vans. U.S. Capitol Police said they would be charged with "crowding, obstructing and incommoding," which is a misdemeanor.

"My colleagues and I are not afraid to get arrested for what we believe is important to move America forward," Rangel said in a video posted to his Twitter account.

Maria Elena Durazo, head of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, also was arrested. "We strongly believe we could get the majority between Democrats and some Republicans to pass immigration reform," she said beforehand.

The National Mall was technically closed along with other sites managed by the National Park Service because of the partial government shutdown. Organizers were allowed to hold the rally, named Camino Americano, on 1st Amendment grounds. The same exception was granted to veterans visiting the National World War II Memorial, also on the National Mall, last week.

Advocates held signs reading "Unite" and "Keep families together — immigration reform now." Three young boys wore shirts bearing the words, "Don't deport my dad."

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco), joined on stage by about 15 lawmakers, told the rally crowd that immigrants "make America more American." She was interrupted by chants of "Si se puede" — Spanish for "Yes we can" — and "We need a vote."

Pelosi praised an immigration bill proposed by House Democrats last week, which she said would be good for the economy and help reduce the deficit.

The Democratic-controlled Senate passed a bipartisan immigration bill in July, but it failed to gain traction in the GOP-led House and is unlikely to pass in the current session.

Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.), one of the strongest opponents of the Senate bill, criticized the rally and the proposed legislation.

<http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-immigration-rally-20131009,0,315074.story>

"There's something odd about House leaders like Nancy Pelosi protesting on the Mall to get jobs for illegal aliens and pushing legislation to reduce job opportunities for U.S. citizens," he said in a statement.

The White House applauded what it called the "enthusiastic demonstration of support for immigration reform."

"It is time for House Republicans to put politics aside and join Democrats to fix our broken immigration system and make the economy stronger," said a statement from Jay Carney, the White House press secretary.

becca.clemons@latimes.com

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http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/rep-john-lewis-arrested-during-immigration-rally-outside-of-us-capitol-building/2013/10/08/8905e29e-305d-11e3-9ddd-bdd3022f66ee_story.html

Rep. John Lewis arrested during immigration rally outside of US Capitol building

By Associated Press

Washington Post, October 8, 2013

Office of John Lewis/Associated Press - In this photo provided by the office of U.S. Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., Lewis, left, is arrested near the Capitol building in Washington during the Camino Americano Rally for Immigrant Dignity and Respect Tuesday afternoon, Oct. 8, 2013. Lewis' spokeswoman says the congressman has now been arrested five times while in office.

WASHINGTON — A spokeswoman for Democratic Rep. John Lewis says the congressman was arrested during an immigration rally in Washington.

Brenda Jones says Lewis, whose district covers Atlanta and some of its neighboring areas, was arrested Tuesday afternoon during the Camino Americano Rally for Immigrant Dignity and Respect. Jones says Lewis was taken into custody in front of the U.S. Capitol, near the reflecting pond.

Jones says Lewis has now been arrested five times as a member of Congress. Lewis was arrested twice at the South African embassy protesting apartheid and twice at the Sudanese embassy protesting genocide in Darfur.

Jones says Lewis was also arrested more than 40 times during the civil rights movement.

VA to furlough 7,000 employees, close regional offices

By Rick Maze, Staff writer

Navy Times, October 7, 2013

Veterans regional offices will be closed and nobody will answer their phones beginning Tuesday morning as the government shutdown forces furloughs of 7,000 employees of the Veterans Benefits Administration.

“All public access to VBA regional offices and facilities will be suspended,” said Veterans Affairs Department spokeswoman Victoria Dillon.

Walk-ins and phone calls to regional offices are common to get status reports on benefits and to seek help. The voluntary officers from veterans organizations who help file claims are located in many regional offices, so access to them could be restricted.

While phones won't be answered at regional offices, most toll-free numbers where veterans can get help with benefits remain open. One exception is the GI Bill call center, which is closed and won't reopen until the VA receives funding.

The Veterans Benefits Administration has more than 21,000 employees, most of who will remain on the job. Of the 332,000 total VA employees, fewer than 15,000 are subject to furloughs during lapses in appropriations, according to VA's contingency planning. The bulk of the furlough-exempt employees are involved in medical care.

Additionally, 2,754 employees of the VA's Office of Information Technology were furloughed on Monday. Veterans might not see an immediate impact, but all development of VA software will stop, including work on the Veterans Benefits Management System that is a key part of plans for eliminating the claims backlog by the end of 2015.

Another shoe could drop soon as VA officials warn that a government shutdown ending in the last two weeks of October could result in delays in Nov. 1 benefits payments, including disability compensation, GI Bill living stipends and dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors. No firm date has been given for when the VA would run out of money.

Veterans hospitals and clinics remain open, as do counseling and rehabilitation programs. An updated list of what is open and closed is available here: www.va.gov/opa/appropriations_lapse_plan.asp.

Benefits claims continue to be processed and new claims are being accepted. However, Dillon warned the pace of processing is slowing.

“VA's ability to make significant progress reducing the disability claims backlog is hampered without the increased productivity gained from overtime for claims processors,” she said. Mandatory overtime “has helped VA significantly reduce the disability claims backlog by more than 190,000 claims over the last six months,” she said.

As of Monday, there were 725,165 pending benefits claims, including 418,711 that are considered by the VA to be part of the so-called “backlog” because they have been pending longer than the 125-day processing goal.

There was a very modest drop of 304 claims in the total, but the VA did hit one landmark as the number of pending disability compensation claims fell just below 400,000.

Claims processors have been working a minimum of 20 hours a month of overtime since mid-May in an effort to process claims. Before the government shut down on Oct. 1, the VA had intended to keep mandatory overtime until Nov. 16, then switch to voluntary overtime through the end of the calendar year. However, mandatory overtime was stopped during the shutdown, she said.

<http://www.navytimes.com/article/20131007/NEWS05/310070042/VA-furlough-7-000-employees-close-regional-offices>

Working extra hours, along with several initiatives to improve claims procedures, resulted in a 30 percent drop in the claims backlog since March, Dillon said, as the VA was processing about 100,000 claims a month.

The House Veterans' Affairs Committee wants to question VA Secretary Eric Shinseki on Wednesday about how the VA is operating under a shutdown but it is unclear whether Shinseki will appear.

In a letter requesting Shinseki's testimony, Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., committee chairman, complains that Congress feels like it has been left in the dark.

"As you should know, I and others have sought greater clarity regarding shutdown-related efforts on VA over the last week, yet we have received no answers from your department," Miller said in an Oct. 4 letter.

Miller said he expects Shinseki to address the timing and scope of any interruptions in veterans' benefits, the impact on claims processing of the loss of funding for overtime and why the VA has stopped providing briefings for Congress if the people who would provide the briefings are still working.

Misconduct

Fired Marine whistle-blower claims he was warned of possible blowback

By Hope Hodge Seck, Staff writer

Marine Corps Times, October 6, 2013

Maj. James Weirick, the Marine attorney and whistle-blower who was fired last month after writing an email his superiors deemed threatening, claims a former supervisor warned him months ago that he could face professional consequences once his whistle-blower protection expires.

Weirick became a whistle-blower in March, when he filed a complaint with the Defense Department inspector general alleging Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Jim Amos and members of his legal staff manipulated the military justice process in an attempt to ensure harsh punishments for several Marines implicated in an embarrassing war-zone video. On Sept. 23, Weirick was removed from his job as the deputy staff judge advocate for Marine Corps Combat Development Command in Quantico, Va., after sending a strongly worded email to one of the men named in his IG complaint.

That email is addressed to Peter Delorier, a former civilian attorney for Amos. In it, Weirick pleads with Delorier to “come clean” about his role in the alleged miscarriage of justice by Amos’ office. Weirick referred to himself in the third person throughout, and at one point told Delorier that while his superiors might have promised to shelter him from professional repercussions, no one can “offer you protection from Weirick.”

Now Weirick is pointing to another email, one he sent July 16 to the command’s then-chief of staff, Col. Jesse Gruter. In that message, Weirick alleges that his boss at the time, Col. Donald Riley, called Weirick into his office for a discussion about emails he had written intending to distance himself and Gruter from what he saw as efforts to hide key information from attorneys defending Marines connected to the video.

Riley replaced Gruter as Weirick’s boss this summer, when officials at Marine Corps headquarters canceled Gruter’s next duty assignment and moved him out of his job as staff judge advocate for Marine Corps Combat Development Command. The command’s top general at the time, Lt. Gen. Richard Mills, opted to retain Gruter as his chief of staff.

“The most troubling part of the conversation was a warning Col. Riley issued to me,” Weirick wrote to Gruter. “He stated that there were some that were contemplating actions against me, but would likely not be [pursuing] actions because I had whistle-blower protection. But, I should not press the issue and I should be careful. He did not elaborate on who was contemplating action against me, nor did he specify what I have allegedly done wrong.”

Weirick’s attorney, Jane Siegel, provided a copy of the July 16 email to Marine Corps Times. Asked to recall what Riley said during their conversation, Weirick, responding through Siegel, said “There are people who want to take action against you. But because you are a whistle-blower, they probably won’t. But that whistle-blower protection will not last forever, so don’t press it.”

Weirick noted that this quote was not an exact transcript but very close.

A spokesman for Riley, Col. Sean Gibson, declined to discuss Weirick’s claim, saying “statements of that nature may be addressed at a later time in the proper forum, but not via the press.” He did, however, counter allegations Weirick’s removal was an act of reprisal.

The current commanding general of Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Lt. Gen. Kenneth Glueck, “has taken legitimate and appropriate steps as the result of Major Weirick’s email” to Delorier, Gibson said. “The command is well aware of obligations to service members who have made protected communication to the inspector general. The command has and will continue to meet these obligations.”

In his July 16 email to Gruter, Weirick contends he was warned by Riley to stop sending emails altogether. Two days prior, Weirick had emailed more than a dozen members of the military legal community, including the commandant’s legal advisers named in his IG complaint, after the Marine Corps disclosed

<http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/article/20131006/NEWS/310060012/Fired-Marine-whistle-blower-claims-he-warned-possible-blowback>

that in early 2012 Amos quietly stripped Lt. Gen. Thomas Waldhauser of his authority to prosecute the Marines implicated in the video, which shows four scout snipers urinating on dead insurgents in Afghanistan. In a signed declaration, Waldhauser later claimed he was pulled off the case after he refused to promise Amos that the snipers would be kicked out of the Corps.

Weirick disavowed further involvement in the case, saying he and Gruter had been used by the Marine Corps to deny the accused scout snipers their legal rights. He was upset that key evidence in the case — called discovery, in legal terminology — had not been shared with defense attorneys.

“As you know,” Weirick’s message to Gruter says, “the purpose of the emails was to distance myself, and you, from the improper withholding of discovery in the [scout sniper] cases.”

Following his relief last month, Weirick also was issued a military restraining order and asked to have a mental-health exam and surrender his personal firearms, according to his attorney, Siegel.

Siegel said the Corps seized Weirick’s work computer and barred him from accessing his former office. But Gibson, the command’s spokesman, disputed this claim.

“Contrary to press reports, Major Weirick’s computer and his computer files have not been seized,” Gibson said. “Major Weirick has not been prevented from making arrangements to return to his office to retrieve personal belongings, but he will require an escort just as any other visitor to the building.”

Gibson added that Glueck ordered Weirick removed from his job, and that the commander of Quantico’s Headquarters and Service Battalion, Col. Robin Gallant, issued the restraining order. Gallant “is currently looking into Major Weirick’s actions and determining the way forward,” Gibson said. “These commanders continue to make their own independent and unfettered decisions based on their own assessments of the facts.”

Navy 3-star fired as No. 2 nuclear commander

By Robert Burns, The Associated Press

Navy Times, October 9, 2013



WASHINGTON — The deputy commander of U.S. nuclear forces, Vice Adm. Tim Giardina, was notified Wednesday that he has been relieved of duty amid a military investigation of allegations that he used counterfeit chips at an Iowa casino, the Navy said.

The move is exceedingly rare and perhaps unprecedented in the history of U.S. Strategic Command, which is responsible for all American nuclear warfighting forces, including nuclear-armed submarines, bombers and land-based missiles.

The Navy's top spokesman, Rear Adm. John Kirby, said Giardina, who had held the job since December 2011, is being reassigned to the Navy staff pending the outcome of the probe by the Naval Criminal

Investigative Service. The gambling matter originated as a local law enforcement investigation in Iowa in June.

As a consequence of being removed from his post at Strategic Command, Giardina falls in rank to two-star admiral. He had been suspended by Gen. Robert Kehler, the top commander at Strategic Command, on Sept. 3, although that move was not disclosed publicly until Sept. 28.

After his suspension Giardina remained at Strategic Command but was not allowed to perform duties that required use of his security clearance.

The decision to take the next step — to relieve him of duty — was made on Oct. 3, one official said. That required approval by President Obama, two defense officials said. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss the internal decision-making.

Kehler had recommended to Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel that Giardina be relieved of duty and returned to the Navy, and Hagel agreed, according to Pentagon spokesman Carl Woog.

Giardina had no comment Wednesday, according to a Strategic Command spokeswoman, Navy Capt. Pamela Kunze.

A former commander of Strategic Command, retired Air Force Gen. Eugene Habiger, said he believes this is the first time in the history of the command that a deputy commander has been relieved of duty. Strategic Command was created in 1992 at the end of the Cold War. The aim was to unify the command of nuclear forces previously run separately by the Air Force and the Navy.

"I know of no other case ever of a deputy commander who was relieved for cause," Habiger said in a telephone interview. He headed the command from 1996-98.

Giardina is a career submarine officer. He commanded Submarine Squadron 17 in Bangor, Wash., which included 10 nuclear-armed Trident submarines from 2001-03. He is a 1979 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and holds an advanced degree in business administration.

Iowa state officials have said Giardina is alleged to have used \$1,500 in counterfeit chips at the Horseshoe Casino in Council Bluffs, Iowa, across the Missouri River from Strategic Command headquarters near Omaha, Neb. He has not been charged with a crime.

In July the White House nominated Air Force Lt. Gen. James Kowalski to succeed Giardina as deputy commander at Strategic Command, but his nomination has not been confirmed by the Senate.

Kowalski has overseen the Air Force's nuclear bomber and intercontinental ballistic missiles forces since January 2011 as commander of Air Force Global Strike Command at Barksdale Air Force Base, La.

Racism

Tribe seeks to force NFL Redskins name change

By Alison Harding

CNN, October 8, 2013

Washington (CNN) -- President Barack Obama has weighed in. The pro football commissioner has too. And now, a Native American tribe hopes recent attention to controversy surrounding the name of Washington's National Football League team will provide the momentum needed to get it changed.

As NFL executives arrived in the nation's capital for their annual fall meeting on Monday, the Oneida Indian Nation held a symposium in town to discuss their campaign to find a new name for the Washington Redskins after 80 years. "We are asking the NFL to stop using a racial slur as the name of Washington's football team," said Oneida Indian Nation Representative Ray Halbritter. The "Change the Mascot" campaign launched last month with a string of radio ads airing in Washington and cities where the Redskins play this season.

In an interview with the Associated Press last week, Obama said if he were the owner of the Redskins and he knew the name was "offending a sizable group of people," then he would "think about changing it."

Halbritter began his remarks by thanking the president for weighing in. "As the first sitting president to speak out against the Washington team name, President Obama's comments over the weekend were nothing less than historic," Halbritter said. "Isn't that the real issue? No matter what the history of something is, if it's offending people, then it's time to change it. And this is a great time to do it."

Obama on the Redskins

A Washington Post poll from June indicated that two-thirds of people who live in the D.C. metropolitan area didn't want the Redskins to change their name, but more than eight in 10 said it wouldn't make much of a difference to them if the name were changed.

Last month, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell, who had previously expressed support for the team mascot, changed his tone on the "The LaVar Arrington Show with Chad Dukes" on 106.7 The Fan in Washington. "I want all of us to go out and make sure we're listening to our fans, listening to people of a different view, and making sure that we continue to do what's right to make sure that team represents the strong tradition and history that it has for so many years," Goodell said.

The NFL confirmed on Monday that it would meet with Oneida leaders. But Redskins owner Dan Snyder has steadfastly refused to consider it, telling USA Today last spring that he will "NEVER" change his team's name, even if they lose an ongoing federal trademark lawsuit that would stop the NFL team from exclusively profiting from the Redskins name. In addition to the federal trademark lawsuit, a group of U.S. lawmakers drafted a bill last spring to cancel trademark registrations that use the name "Redskins."

Two of them, Democrats Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton of the District of Columbia, and Rep. Betty McCollum of Minnesota attended Monday's forum to voice their support.

D.C. council member pushes name change for Washington Redskins. McCollum, who is co-chair of the Congressional Native American Caucus, said the use of the Redskins name is "exploitation perpetrated for profit by the NFL and Dan Snyder's football business."

"Mr. Snyder, change the mascot. End this ugly history and tradition of your team's racial slur. Pick a new mascot. Pick one that offends no one, hurts no one, dehumanizes no one. It is time to put dignity and respect for native American people ahead of your profits," McCollum said. Snyder did not respond to a request for comment from CNN.

But Redskins attorney Lanny Davis said Halbritter is being "selective in his outrage," citing other teams named after Native Americans who are not targeted in the "Change the Mascot" campaign. "Why is he not protesting the Atlanta Braves Tomahawk Chop, or President Obama's hometown Chicago Blackhawks?" Davis said.

While Halbritter said that there are certain Native American names that "can be unifying and respectful," he maintains that the Redskins name is "a dictionary defined racial epithet," that shouldn't be used to "sell a

<http://www.cnn.com/2013/10/07/us/washington-redskins-name/index.html>

national sports team to America or to the rest of the world." Washington Redskins' owner: 'We will never change the name of the team'

"Washington's continued use of the current team name is not just a slur against one group of people, it has demonstrable and serious public policy cultural educational, public health ramifications for our entire country," Halbritter said.

Critics argue that the Redskins' name is based on a historically offensive slur and presents negative identity issues for Native Americans, a community already distressed by a slew of public health and social crises including high rates of poverty, diabetes, and suicide.

Dr. Michael Friedman, a clinical psychologist who attended the forum, called Snyder's refusal to consider calls for a name change "textbook bullying."

"Experimental study after experimental study shows that if you bring a Native American person into an experimental situation and you show them an image of a Native American mascot, their self-esteem goes down, their faith in their community goes down, their feeling that they can achieve goes down," Friedman said.

But Davis said Friedman is ignoring other data that shows Native Americans are not insulted by the name. "I ask him, since there's no intent to disparage or disrespect - and I certainly respect those, and am sorry for those, who are offended - why is he selecting the Washington Redskins? Does he see the Tomahawk Chop of the Atlanta Braves fans? They're doing that not out of disrespect. They love the Atlanta Braves." Other at the forum, like Norton, said the intent behind keeping the name doesn't matter.

"I want to say this to Redskins fans. No one blames you for having used a name that was always used as this team. They will only blame you if you continue to use it and if you use it will impunity," she said. The NFL Redskins were in Boston before the Washington franchise was born in 1933. Braves reject 'screaming Indian' logo

SEE ALSO:

[No consensus among Indians on 'Redskins' name](#) [Jesse Washington (AP), *Yahoo.com*, 9 October 2013]

Religion

Non-Catholics Support MoH Soldier's Sainthood

By Roy Wenzl

The Wichita Eagle, Sep 27, 2013

Emil Kapaun's canonization as a Roman Catholic saint, if it happens, will come with an unusual religious twist:



Most of the crucial testimony about his Korean War heroics has been supplied by an impassioned remnant of Kapaun's former prisoner-of-war friends, nearly all of whom are Protestants. Another, Robert McGreevy, is a lapsed Catholic who left the church in disgust years ago because of its sexual abuse scandals.

Having non-Catholics testify in a sainthood investigation is a good thing, said the Rev. John Hotze, the Wichita Diocese priest who has collected evidence about Kapaun's heroics for the Vatican investigation. "It adds to the authenticity, in that Catholics are familiar with saints and with the canonization process," he said. "Generally with Protestants, all that is foreign to them."

The Vatican is sending one of its top sainthood investigators, Andrea Ambrosi, to Wichita again this weekend to examine more evidence the church says could solidify Kapaun's candidacy for sainthood. Most of the evidence Ambrosi will look at this time involves "alleged miracles," where young Wichitans survived medical crises a few years ago because their families prayed to Kapaun, asking his help in heaven to save them. Both of those events took place decades after Kapaun, a native of Pilsen in Marion County, died in a North Korean prison camp in 1951.

The non-Catholics who have given Kapaun's sainthood a boost not only gave factual accounts of his heroics to Hotze, but spent decades making impassioned requests -- to the U.S. Army to give him the Medal of Honor and to the Catholic Church to make him a saint. President Obama awarded Kapaun's family the medal in April.

"He was an inspiration to everyone in a desperate group reduced to living dog-eat-dog," said former POW Robert Wood this week. "He reminded us by his example that we all have a duty to each other and to our God. He was a light in a very dark room."

Most of the eyewitnesses to Kapaun's heroics in the North Korean POW camps are dead. But the few living survivors who have been instrumental in moving Kapaun toward sainthood are Protestant, including Wood, Mike Dowe, William Funchess and Herbert Miller. Hearing these men talk about Kapaun, Hotze said, has always left him awed.

"I've often thought about what it must have been like to hear him talk," Hotze said.

Their accounts have become crucial not only to making Kapaun a candidate for sainthood but in speeding up the canonization by years. Hotze said that if the Vatican decides that Kapaun was "martyred" for defending his faith, it would allow the church to proceed faster toward canonization.

At least three surviving POWs who witnessed Kapaun's final hours -- Dowe, Wood and Funchess -- have said they saw Kapaun killed by the camp guards. They said the guards ordered the sick and starving Kapaun isolated from all help in the camp's "death house."

They say he was killed not only for rallying them to resist communist brainwashing but for defying camp guards who banned all religious activities in the camp. That is the Catholic textbook definition of a martyr, Hotze said. "It is their testimony, if you go ask them, that he was killed because of his faith," Hotze said.

"Every one of them will say that." In deciding whether he was a martyr, Hotze said, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints at the Vatican will have to decide whether Kapaun was killed while serving as a soldier opposing enemy abuse, or whether he died standing up for his faith. Based on the POW testimony, Hotze said, "He was doing both."

<http://www.military.com/daily-news/2013/09/27/non-catholics-support-moh-soldiers-sainthood.html>

Having Protestants like himself testify to Kapaun's greatness as a Catholic might seem like an odd twist, Wood said. But though Kapaun devoted his life to the Catholic Church, Wood and the others saw him risk his life in hundreds of ways to save the lives of non-Catholics, whether by dragging wounded soldiers to safety on battlefields, or by giving his own food away in the prison camp.

"In that first winter, we lost 40 percent of our number," Wood said. "Many of us felt like we'd been abandoned by our own nation, and we were hanging on to life by a thread. But he convinced us to hang on." "His caring personality radiated out to all of us," Funchess said. "Everyone around him could feel it."

Moved by God

Wood, Funchess and Miller all said Kapaun deepened their Christian faith considerably, though they never considered joining the Catholic faith. Miller said that if he could put a few thoughts into the ears at the Vatican, he would tell them he is sure that God deliberately moved Kapaun to do many acts of heroism. One of those acts saved Miller from a battlefield execution.

In early November 1950, Miller was lying wounded in a ditch, about to be executed by an enemy soldier. Kapaun, who had just saved the lives of 40 other wounded American soldiers by begging the Chinese soldiers to spare their lives, suddenly walked away from his own captors. He went over to Miller and pushed the enemy soldier away, carrying Miller to safety.

There was no good military reason for Kapaun to abandon 40 wounded soldiers for a few moments in the middle of an ongoing battle and put a stop to a battlefield execution, Miller said. Kapaun was smart and experienced on battlefields, Miller said, and he knew that technically, this was a terrible idea. "If anybody else would have done what he did in that moment, they would have shot us both," Miller said. "So I think that act alone was a miracle. I think he did it deliberately because the Lord told him to do it."

In the horrific battle where they were both captured, McGreevy said, Kapaun rounded up a group of soldiers before their battalion was overrun and gave them the Catholic Last Rites. While the bullets flew, he carefully explained the Catholic sacrament to the Protestants. He also told them that most of them were not going to survive the battle.

"Everybody listened, including the Protestants," McGreevy said. "No one walked away."

Decades later, disappointed about the church's sex abuse scandals, McGreevy created a small Kapaun shrine in a corner of his house in Cumberland, Md., with a small statue of Kapaun and a Catholic rosary draped over it. "I pray the Catholic prayers and I pray to Father Kapaun every night there," he said. "I thank him for all he did for us."

"And when I do that, I think I'm just as good a Catholic as I ever was."

Rift on religion in workplace

By Robert F. Dorr (Opinion)

Air Force Times, Oct. 8, 2013

An exchange of words Sept. 19 on Capitol Hill reminded us that religion continues to be an issue in the Air Force. Deborah James, the nominee to be secretary of the Air Force, was testifying before the Senate subcommittee charged with acting on her nomination.

James ran straight into the rift between defenders of religious practice as an expression of civil liberties and critics who argue that while faith may be a good thing, it doesn't belong in the workplace. Both sides have proponents who are fervent in their faith and others who aren't believers at all.

Sen. David Vitter, R-La., asked James if it's acceptable for an airman to have a Bible on his desk or for a chaplain to end a prayer "in Jesus' name." Vitter said each example is "a documented case" among 42 that have come to his attention in which individuals were barred from certain actions. Vitter said efforts to remove religion from the workplace amount to "political correctness run amok on steroids ... quashing legitimate exercise and expression of religion in the military."

In what she may have instantly recognized as a slip, James told Vitter: "Having a Bible on your desk, that doesn't seem like it should be banned."

Less controversially, referring to the chaplain's prayer, James said, "That doesn't bother me." She added, "Something that may not be troubling to me personally may be to others and the idea of dignity and respect for all religions, to include those who have no religion at all, it's equally important."

Among critics of religion in the workplace is Mikey Weinstein of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, who said in a Sept. 24 telephone interview that James' comment about a Bible is dead wrong. "If she thinks it's perfectly fine for a commander to have a Bible on his desk, she's aligning herself with extremists," Weinstein said. "She needs to read Air Force Instruction 1-1, Section 2.11 about religion in the workplace." Weinstein said the Air Force instruction prohibits the scripture of any branch of religion, not just Christianity.

Vitter and James seemed to be talking about an everyday airman on duty, not about a commander. That doesn't satisfy Weinstein. "She is starting out on the wrong foot," Weinstein said. "Her remark about the Bible is not a small thing."

In my view, religion belongs at home or in chapel, not in the orderly room or on the flight line. Still, we need to cut James a little slack. If James is confirmed by the Senate, we ought to wait and see how she addresses religious concerns once she's on the job.

Sexual Assault / Harassment

<http://www.airforcetimes.com/article/20131007/NEWS/310070009/Fear-retaliation-culture-prevents-airmen-from-speaking-up> or

<http://www.armytimes.com/article/20131007/NEWS/310070009/Fear-retaliation-culture-prevents-airmen-from-speaking-up>

Fear of retaliation: The culture that prevents airmen from speaking up

By Kristin Davis, Staff writer

Air Force Times, October 7, 2013

In her confirmation hearing last month, secretary of the Air Force nominee Deborah James said the service needs to do a better job instilling confidence in victims of military sexual assault. "If they are victimized, we want them to come forward. We want them to report," she told *lawmakers*. But many don't, James said.

Victims "tell me they don't come forward for a number of reasons. They feel personally ashamed. They feel that they may be blamed for what has happened. They do fear retaliation, sometimes from chain of command, sometimes from their buddies in the unit."

Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Welsh and other Air Force leaders say they already are hard at work to encourage victims to report assaults and harassment. Since January, the service has offered victims their own attorneys. The number of sexual assault reports was up from 790 in fiscal 2012 to nearly 1,090 in fiscal 2013, a 38 percent rise they attribute in part to an improved reporting process. Yet lawmakers and victim advocates still hear stories from service members about retaliation.

A Defense Department report released earlier this year showed that nearly half of women among an estimated 26,000 military victims of unwanted sexual contact who remained silent did not come forward because they feared retaliation.

Protect Our Defenders, an advocacy group for victims of military sexual trauma and a staunch proponent of reforms to the Uniform Code of Military Justice, said it is contacted daily by people who say they were retaliated against for making a sexual assault report.

Retaliation is hard to prove, and often the victim's behavior is called into question, said executive director Taryn Meeks. "They become labeled as troublemakers or singled out by their peers or command for relatively small or unsubstantiated misconduct. Sadly, they are forced out of the service they love."

That's the case for three airmen interviewed by Air Force Times. Each one reported sexual assault or harassment, and each one has faced career-ending consequences. While their stories are different, all three airmen said their careers were on track until they spoke out. These are their stories.

Nellis airman: Perpetrators get slap on wrist; she's out

Senior Airman Ciera Bridges said she toiled for three years in a toxic workplace where at least three superiors made sexually explicit advances toward her and other women in the 99th Logistics Readiness Squadron at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev. The harassment began within months of her arrival at Nellis in November 2009, she said, and eventually turned physical, despite repeated complaints to her chain of command. Instead of handling the problems, she has alleged, her superiors retaliated against her, citing Bridges for minor misconduct that culminated in January in a discharge recommendation under other-than-honorable conditions.

Ten months after the discharge notice, Bridges is still waiting to learn her fate. She has asked the 99th Air Base Wing commander, Col. Barry Cornish, who came to the post in June 2012, to reconsider the discharge. There had been no decision at press time. Meanwhile, two of the people accused of harassment and assault remain in the service, according to Air Force documents in Bridges' case. The third was allowed to retire.

All received administrative punishment. Air Force Times is not naming them because such actions are not public. Bridges wants to serve out her six-year commitment to the Air Force, which concludes in May, or receive a separation rollback that will let her leave honorably, said her area defense counsel, Capt. Trae

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Patterson. “She still loves the Air Force. She’s trying to get a fair shake here,” said Patterson, who spoke to Air Force Times as Bridges’ attorney and not on behalf of the service.

Bridges declined an interview request but, through the advocacy group Protect Our Defenders, provided more than 60 pages of documents related to her case. This story is based on those records, as well as interviews with Patterson and Bridges’ parents, Janice and Johnny Bridges, a retired senior master sergeant. Her parents said they want people to know what their daughter has gone through.

Timeline of allegations

Johnny Bridges tried not to show his excitement when his only daughter said she was considering joining the Air Force. He didn’t want to persuade her one way or another.

Bridges was a junior in high school at the time. Johnny Bridges took her to see a recruiter and gave her what he thought were the pros and cons of military life. “After she graduated [from high school], she started talking about college,” he said, and he figured she’d lost interest.

A year later, in May 2008, Janice Bridges gave her husband the news: Their daughter had decided to join after all. They both thought it was a good fit. “I felt like the Air Force, like it did for me, would give her a good start,” Johnny Bridges said. “I told her, ‘Get back in school, get a degree as soon as you can, and get a commission. I would love to see you do that.’ We always talked about her outranking me.”

Things began well. In October 2008, Bridges went to Osan Air Base, South Korea, where she served with the 51st Logistics Readiness Squadron. She arrived at Nellis in November 2009. She was 20 years old. Here, her troubles began, a timeline of events submitted to the Air Force in Bridges’ defense shows.

■2010

In January, a staff sergeant began making sexual comments, which Bridges rebuffed. She did not make a complaint. In September, the staff sergeant issued Bridges a letter of reprimand for speeding on base and talking on a cellphone while driving.

In November, he began sending Bridges naked photos of himself, including a picture of his genitalia. When he started talking about the photos at work, Bridges said she disclosed to him that she was a lesbian. She said the disclosure only intensified the harassment. He continued sending text messages.

In December, Bridges reported the photos to another staff sergeant in her chain of command, according to the timeline. At a unit holiday party, she said a master sergeant bought drinks for her and other airmen and asked for their phone numbers. The airmen declined. Bridges said he got her number from a work roster and sent late-night texts asking what she was wearing and when he could come over.

■2011

In January, Bridges reported that the same staff sergeant who’d made advances toward her had harassed another woman in the unit but said both complaints languished. She said the staff sergeant to whom she’d made the report had become romantically involved with the accused. She asked for a reassignment, but it was denied.

In February, another superior, also a staff sergeant, “pressed his body and groin against Bridges’ buttocks,” the timeline said. In May, Bridges reported the text messages and sexual advances to a technical sergeant, a master sergeant and a senior master sergeant. The master sergeant told her he would deal with the problems. At that time, “she’s told to take a couple of weeks of leave by her bosses and then she’s transferred to a different section inside the squadron,” said Patterson, her attorney.

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The move put her under the supervision of the master sergeant who she said had made advances at the December 2010 holiday party and sent the late-night messages. The harassment continued to escalate. Bridges said she was subjected to jeers, obscene gestures and sexual remarks.

■2012

Bridges described a January incident in which the staff sergeant who'd pressed himself against her walked into the office in Spandex gym shorts, "put his foot on the counter and began to stretch and thrust his groin." In March, Bridges got a letter of counseling for being late for a shift and a letter of reprimand for being late to a meeting. Bridges maintained she was on time for the shift. She said she was summoned to the meeting after getting off of a seven-day shift. In a response, Bridges apologized for the mistake.

In April, a co-worker accused Bridges of domestic abuse in a base parking lot. The purported victim, Bridges' partner, wrote a statement denying the abuse, and the base Family Advocacy Center said the allegations were unfounded. When a letter of counseling for the alleged incident was not withdrawn, Bridges sought out the base inspector general. The IG suggested she try to work it out with her commander. Bridges made an appointment; it was canceled without explanation.

In August, Bridges said she walked into a dark office to retrieve keys. The second staff sergeant with whom she'd had trouble was there. "He picked her up with one hand and set her on his desk," according to the timeline. "He stood between Senior Airman Bridges' legs and grinded his erection against [her] groin [and said], 'You can have this whenever you want it.'"

Bridges said she feared for her life. Weeks later, she received another letter of reprimand, this time for disorderly conduct at an elementary school. According to the letter, Bridges disobeyed school officials' orders to wait for her partner's child in the office, instead going off in search of him. School officials called the police. In a response, Bridges apologized for her behavior at the school and took full responsibility. But the incident got her snatched off the promotion list for staff sergeant. Her assignment change request was canceled and her supervisors began an unfavorable information file on Bridges.

■2013

In January, Bridges left her place of duty to run an errand without following a security checklist. She returned without issue; days later, when another squadron member left work during a weekend shift, an investigation was launched into both incidents. Bridges was given an Article 15. The involuntary discharge notice arrived Jan. 15.

Patterson said he thought Bridges had a solid defense for at least some of the events for which Bridges was cited. Some were misunderstandings. Some were "not warranted under the facts that they had," he said. But "when somebody gives you a letter of counseling, there is no appellate authority," he said.

Air Force response

Nellis spokeswoman Airman 1st Class Monet Villacorte said in an email officials cannot comment on ongoing investigations. But "leadership at Nellis takes all claims of sexual harassment and any other allegations seriously and investigates these and any derivative allegations," she wrote.

In addition to defense counsel, the Air Force provides special victims counsel to airmen who say they were sexually assaulted, Villacorte said.

Bridges has moved into a new squadron while she awaits word on her future in the Air Force. In a letter to the Nellis commander, Bridges says she was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress and major depression as a result of the trauma. She writes of feeling on edge, losing her temper easily and making bad choices. "I was an outstanding airman with a promising career and wanted to retire from the service after a long career like my father," Bridges said, "until the sexual assault occurred."

A changed daughter

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Bridges confided in her mother nearly as soon as the harassment began, Janice Bridges said. “She called me very upset, very emotional,” she said. It was harder for the senior airman to tell her dad what was going on. “She was embarrassed,” Janice Bridges said. “Sometimes, as a woman, it’s not easy to divulge this to a male figure. With some coaxing from me, she confided in her dad. As a family unit, we have been working together ever since.”

Johnny Bridges said he started thinking like a first sergeant, a role he had served in for years. “I told her, ‘No. 1, report it to your immediate supervisor. Hopefully, that person will take it on up the chain, and let the system handle it.’ I know what the process is and how long it can take and everything that goes into it.”

He also had words of caution. “When you report these things, the climate changes in your workplace,” he said. He told her not to expect everything to go her way. “Make sure that you are on time, that you do your job, that you go to lunch and come back when you’re supposed to. Do everything you are supposed to do according to [Air Force Instruction]. You don’t want to give anybody anything to use against you,” he advised.

Both Janice and Johnny Bridges said they believe many of the misconduct allegations against their daughter would not have occurred prior to reporting the harassment. They have watched their daughter transform from upbeat and outgoing to quiet and withdrawn.

“She was an engaging kid. She was such a delight. Everybody loved her,” Janice Bridges said. “[Now] she just looks like someone who is carrying the weight of the world on her shoulder.”

“These are some of the things I tried to warn her about,” Johnny Bridges said. “These people are trying to protect themselves as much as she’s trying to protect herself. She’s kind of young and thinking everyone is going to be honest. But everybody is trying to save their own life.” ■

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20130930931866.html> or
<http://www.stripes.com/news/sexual-harassment-assault-more-likely-for-deployed-women-who-saw-combat-1.243735>

Sexual harassment, assault more likely for deployed women who saw ‘combat’

By Wyatt Olson

Stars and Stripes, September 30, 2013

Deployed women who underwent “combat-like” experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan are much more likely to report sexually harassment and sexual assault compared with other deployed women, according to a new study.

Published in the August edition of Women’s Health Issues journal, the study used data from more than 13,000 military women who have been tracked in the Millennium Cohort Study, which began in 2001. Participants filled out an extensive “baseline” questionnaire and repeat the Defense Department research survey at three-year intervals.

Sexual assault of women in the military has become a major focus for the Pentagon and the service branches. Victims have called on the Defense Department and Congress to take effective steps to curb assaults and prosecute perpetrators.

Women account for about 200,000 of the military’s 1.4 million active-duty personnel, according to Pentagon figures. More than 280,000 women have deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq since the 9/11 attacks, and women will likely see more combat after the Defense Department rescinded a rule barring them from combat positions earlier this year. The DOD plans to integrate them into those jobs by 2016.

The journal study is the first to use such a broad-based group of female servicemembers — including reserve and National Guard personnel — to analyze the association between “sexual stressors” and deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Cynthia LeardMann, a researcher with the Naval Health Research Center in San Diego who co-authored the journal article, said the study increases data “about where we can specifically help provide interventions and prevention programs” so the military can “target certain environments, as well as, perhaps, certain service branches.”

The study categorized stressors as sexual harassment, sexual assault or a combination.

Women were considered to have combat-like experience if they witnessed at least one of these: death, physical abuse, dead or decomposing bodies, maimed soldiers or civilians, or prisoners of war or refugees.

Deployed women exposed to combat-like experiences reported a 20 percent incidence rate of sexual harassment and a 4 percent rate of sexual assault during the three-year follow-up period after the baseline questionnaire.

While the study could not pinpoint the reported sexual stressor as happening during deployment, LeardMann said that the researchers were “pretty confident” that incidents such as witnessing death or rotting corpses would likely be during deployment.

The study also found that the youngest deployed women, born after 1980, were more than five times more likely to report sexual assault than their older counterparts.

Rates of sexual harassment and assault varied by branch of service. For example, the rate of sexual harassment for women in the Air Force and Navy was the lowest at 5.8 percent. That rate in the Army was 10.3 percent, with the Marines having the highest at 13.3 percent.

Female Marines also reported the highest rate of sexual assault at 6.6 percent, compared to 1.6 percent reported by Air Force women.

The authors offered possible explanations for increased sexual harassment/assault during deployment.

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“Women who experience combat while deployed are not only in more stressful and dangerous circumstances but they may also find themselves in more traditionally male-dominated environments compared with other deployed women,” the study said.

“Furthermore, in these high-stress and often life-threatening environments, prioritizing the identification and prevention of sexual stressors may be more challenging, perpetrators may be less concerned with consequences of committing assault, and perpetrators may be less likely to be held accountable for their actions.”

The study did not collect information on the perpetrators of reported sexual harassment/assault.

The researchers discovered that women who had been deployed before the baseline questionnaire reported far fewer experiences of sexual harassment and assault.

“Some of this we believe to be a selection effect,” LeardMann said. “That is, women who have experienced sexual trauma are probably more likely to leave service. So it could be that those women who have had a prior experience are more likely to get out; therefore, the women who are left in our population to continue to serve in the military are going to be less likely to experience another event or haven’t experienced it in the past because they are the ones who stayed in.”

Because the findings indicate that risk factors are related to the type of environment — such as combat experience and branch of service — and to “resiliency factors” such as changes in marital status, the study concludes it would be wise to target prevention efforts in these areas.