

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.

27 reports of extremist activity by US service members over the past 5 years, DOD says [Shawn Snow, *Marine Corps Times*, 2019-09-13]

- There have been 27 reports of [extremist](#) activity by service members over the past five years, the Defense Department said in a 2018 letter addressed to then-Rep. Keith Ellison, D-Minn.
- All but two of those 27 service members had been formally investigated, and 18 service members were disciplined or [separated](#) from the military, the DOD said.
- The letter from the Pentagon, dated Aug. 24, 2018, was sent to Ellison in response to his request for information related to [supremacist](#) and [extremist](#) activity across the military.

[27 reports of extremist activity by US service members over the past 5 years, DOD says](#)

The Air Force Has Declared War on Hopelessness in the Ranks [Patricia Kime, *Military.com*, 2019-09-18]

- As the Air Force struggles with a sharp rise in suicides this year, “toxic” and uncaring leadership has emerged as a major factor in the well-being of airmen—an issue the service needs to tackle head-on, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Kaleth Wright said Tuesday.
- Air Force units were ordered in August to [hold a one-day “tactical pause”](#) to reflect on wellness and resiliency after 78 airmen took their own lives between Jan. 1 and July 31. Following the stand-down, a Facebook support group called Air Force Wingman Outreach emerged to help service members in crisis.
- Within the group, members cited unresponsive mental health services, concerns about security clearances, and fear of being stigmatized by peers for getting mental health treatment as reasons why airmen don’t reveal their personal struggles.

[The Air Force Has Declared War on Hopelessness in the Ranks](#)

Is military domestic violence a ‘forgotten crisis’? [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 2019-09-18]

- House lawmakers are blasting defense officials for allowing [domestic abuse](#) to become “a forgotten crisis” in the military, saying not enough has been done to protect victims, [punish attackers](#) or even track the issue.
- Domestic violence has only been a crime under the Uniform Code of Military Justice for a few months, after lawmakers added it as part of last year’s defense authorization bill. Before that, offenses were prosecuted under a patchwork of other regulations, which advocates said severely restricted the services’ ability to track and monitor the problem.
- Earlier this year, the Defense Department Inspector General found that military response to domestic violence cases were inconsistent, with service law enforcement frequently making mistakes in processing crime scenes and infrequently informing victims of support services.

[Is military domestic violence a ‘forgotten crisis’?](#)

DISCRIMINATION

[Appeals court asked to halt discharge of Airmen with HIV](#) [Denise Lavoie, *The Associated Press*, 2019-09-18]

Lawyers for two Air Force members who are HIV-positive urged a federal appeals court Wednesday to uphold an injunction that bars the Trump administration from continuing with discharge proceedings against them.

The Department of Defense is appealing a ruling by a judge who found that the Air Force is working under policies that are “irrational” and “outdated.”

The policies prevented the service members with HIV from deploying outside the U.S. without a waiver and resulted in them being considered “unfit” for continued service. The Department of Justice has argued that the military allows service members who contract HIV to continue to serve if they can perform their duties.

DIVERSITY

[1st Female Airman to Earn Ranger Tab Is Now Training for Disaster Response](#) [Richard Sisk, *Military.com*, 2019-09-18]

[1st Lt. Chelsea] Hibsich, a former enlisted airman from Attica, New York, was in the process of transitioning to the 621st from a previous assignment in the Indo-Pacific region when she was selected for Ranger School.

“She graduated that rigorous course and became the first [Air Force] female to earn an Army Ranger tab, which by uniform ‘regs’ she’s entitled to wear the rest of her life,” [Air Force Col. Douglas Jackson, Hibsich’s commander at the 621st Contingency Response Wing] explained.

Hibsich’s accomplishment has resonated throughout the Air Force. On Monday at the conference, Lt. Gen. Jim Slife, commander of Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), said: “That’s the caliber of airman” AFSOC is seeking. “We’re anxious to see our recruiting efforts bear fruit” to put women in the ranks of AFSOC, he said.

HUMAN RELATIONS

[The Air Force Has Declared War on Hopelessness in the Ranks](#) [Patricia Kime, *Military.com*, 2019-09-18]

As the Air Force struggles with a sharp rise in suicides this year, “toxic” and uncaring leadership has emerged as a major factor in the well-being of airmen—an issue the service needs to tackle head-on, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Kaleth Wright said Tuesday.

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Mental health care is the key to keeping spec ops forces ready for the next fight

[Meghann Myers, *Military Times*, 2019-09-18]

At a time when the Pentagon is preparing itself for a clash with a well-funded and equipped military power, lawmakers are warning that support for [special operations](#) deployments should not go away, and even more investment should be made in [mental health care](#) for special operations forces as well as other troops and veterans.

Special operations forces do a lot more than kick down doors, [Rep. Adam Smith](#), D-Wash., chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, said Wednesday, and they'll need to stay strong to keep playing that role, whether the next great conflict is with an insurgency or a great power.

"We've more than doubled the size of the SOF force in the last 10-to-12 years, and it's become an enormous part of our foreign policy and our defense policy," he said on a panel at the New America Foundations' SOF Policy Forum in Washington.

Mental Health Counseling, Support Services for DOD Civilians Resume—For Now

[Richard Sisk, *Military.com*, 2019-09-13]

The Defense Department's Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which offers referrals for [mental health](#) counseling, substance abuse and other support services to DOD civilians, has been restored for at least 60 days following its [abrupt suspension in an apparent contract dispute](#), according to the Pentagon.

EAP programs, provided through the Program Support Center at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), have been restored "for a period of 60 days that started September 9," Pentagon spokeswoman Heather Babb said late Thursday.

With no public announcement, the DOD, the largest government employer with more than 700,000 in the civilian workforce at the Pentagon and the service branches, suspended EAP on Sept. 1

The VA's suicide prevention strategy will fail [Sean Gilfillan, *Military Times*, 2019-09-17] [OPINION]

The suicide rate for young adults was [17 per 100,000 population](#) in 2017, while the suicide rate for veterans 18-39 is [over 50 per 100,000](#).

The VA strategy says, "Suicide prevention is VA's highest priority." If that were true, the VA would not outsource the solution to local, community-based organizations. In the [VA's National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide](#), there are four critical protective factors that help offset risk factors.

Two clinical solutions: 1) Positive coping skills, and 2) Access to mental health care; and two non-clinical solutions: 3) Feeling connected to other people, and 4) Having reasons for living or a sense of purpose in life. The VA's strategy has a "lead from behind" approach for the latter two. We give the [VA \\$220.2 billion per year](#) to take care of our 20 million veterans. Yet, the VA wants to outsource outreach to veteran service organizations (VSOs), nonprofits, local businesses and governments to address the two non-clinical factors. While [VSOs advocate on behalf of all veterans](#), they are not in touch with all veterans.

MISCELLANEOUS

AETC commander: 'We owe airmen better' than moldy Lackland dorms, but situation improving [Stephen Losey, *Air Force Times*, 2019-09-18]

The Air Force has finished removing the [rampant mold](#) that was infesting some dormitories at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland.

But the [mold problem](#) never should have gotten to the point where it took a [social media storm](#) and the ensuing outrage to fix it, Lt. Gen. Brad Webb, the head of Air Education and Training Command, told reporters Tuesday at the Air Force Association's Air Space Cyber conference in National Harbor, Maryland.

In July, Lackland officials temporarily moved hundreds of residents of its permanent party and technical training dorms after photographs of moldy dorms hit social media and prompted an outcry among airmen. Some photographs showed mold on a pillow, a box spring, a uniform sleeve, boots and a video game controller.

[Afghanistan and Iraq veterans were the 'ground zero' of the opioid crisis: Study](#) **[Cassidy Morrison, *Washington Examiner*, 2019-09-17]**

Veterans who were stationed in Afghan and Iraqi war zones after the 9/11 terror attacks have been hit hardest by the opioid crisis, according to new research.

Veterans of the global war on terrorism are experiencing an opioid epidemic nearly twice as severe as the one plaguing civilians, according to a new study distributed by the [National Bureau of Economic Research](#). Researchers affiliated with the University of Connecticut, University of Georgia, and San Diego State University concluded that combat veterans who were deployed after the 9/11 attacks have an opioid abuse rate about seven times higher than civilians who have never served in a combat zone.

"While grim national statistics about the 'worst drug overdose epidemic in history' are increasingly well known to the American public, far less well known is that combat veterans constitute a population at ground zero of this crisis," the authors concluded.

[Air Force Ad Campaign Will Leverage Space Force Buzz to Drive Recruitment](#) **[Hope Hodge Seck, *Military.com*, 2019-09-16]**

When Maj. Gen. Jeannie Leavitt, head of the Air Force's recruiting service, interacts with the public, the topic of a yet-to-be-created [Space Force](#) comes up frequently.

With a proposal before Congress to create a Space Force that falls under the Air Force in the same way the Marine Corps falls under the Navy, the Air Force is already crafting a marketing campaign that leverages space to boost recruiting.

The Pentagon and White House recently held a ceremony to [activate U.S. Space Command](#), a new U.S. combatant command led by Air Force Gen. John "Jay" Raymond. Space Command is intended to precede the creation of U.S. Space Force, a sixth branch of the U.S. military.

[Air Force mulls fitness assessment changes to reduce risks from rapid weight loss](#) **[Jennifer H. Svan, *Stars & Stripes*, 2019-09-19]**

The Air Force is considering changes to the way it conducts fitness assessments to prevent airmen from over-taxing their bodies to try to meet test standards, the service's top enlisted leader said.

On the heels of three deaths earlier this year that occurred after physical training, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Kaleth O. Wright said the service may follow the Army and separate, by a week or more, the abdominal circumference measurement portion of the test from the physically challenging component, which includes timed pushups, sit-ups and a run.

The idea would be to avoid testing airmen when they may not be at peak performance levels — or worse, in a weakened state after trying to lose weight quickly to reduce their waist size and lose weight ahead of the test.

SEE ALSO:

[After PT Deaths, Air Force Weighs Separating Waist Measurement from Fitness Test](#) [*Military.com*, 2019-09-18]

[Air Force to Institute New Fitness Requirements for Commanders](#) [Patricia Kime, *Military.com*, 2019-09-17]

[Air Force](#) Chief of Staff Gen. David Goldfein has a message for commanders on their physical condition: Get on a fitness program or your job is at risk.

According to recently published Defense Department data, [the Air Force](#) has the second-highest percentage of obese troops, following the Navy. Some 18% of all airmen are obese, according to the most recent Health of the DOD Force report.

Goldfein didn't provide specifics on his plan, but the initiative is part of an ongoing overhaul of Air Force fitness, designed to ensure that service members are fit without the current emphasis on the physical fitness assessment.

[Army revamps recruiting, hits enlistment goal](#) [Lolita C. Baldor, *The Associated Press*, 2019-09-17]

A year after failing to meet its enlistment goal for the first time in 13 years, the U.S. Army is now on track to meet a lower 2019 target after revamping its recruitment effort.

*Army leaders tell *The Associated Press* that they expect to sign up more than 68,000 active duty soldiers for the fiscal year that ends Sept. 30, as the largest branch of the U.S. military [increasingly turns to social media](#) and other new online methods to find potential recruits.*

Last year, the Army brought in about 70,000 new active duty recruits, well below the 76,500 it needed amid low unemployment and tough competition from higher-paying civilian companies. Meeting the lower 2019 figure is considered a victory for a service that has struggled to compete for young people who are less familiar with the military and that was criticized last year for using more bad conduct waivers and other waivers to meet enlistment goals.

[Bid to allow troops to sue for military medical malpractice hits Senate snag](#) [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 2019-09-11]

Advocates this week praised a new bipartisan bill to allow troops to [sue the military in medical malpractice cases](#), but a key senator is still blocking any effort to overhaul the legal precedent, dimming chances for any major change this year.

On Tuesday, Sens. John Kennedy, R-La., and Mazie Hirono, D-Hawaii, introduced stand-alone legislation aimed at overturning parts of [the Feres doctrine](#), a 1950s Supreme Court decision cited repeatedly by lower courts to block troops from seeking damages for war-related injuries or on-duty accidents.

The move follows similar legislation in the House sponsored by Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif., that was included in the chamber's draft of the [annual defense authorization bill](#). The Senate sponsors called the change a matter of fairness for those who serve in the military.

Chief Wright eyes big changes to enlisted evals, re-enlistments and PT [Stephen Losey, *Air Force Times*, 2019-09-15]

Big changes to the enlisted evaluation process, physical fitness testing and re-enlistments are on the agenda in the coming year for Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force [Kaleth Wright](#).

In a Sept. 3 interview, Wright said that the Air Force is working on potential tweaks to the enlisted evaluation system reforms put into place in 2015. One of the biggest changes under consideration could be to drop Weighted Airman Promotion System, or WAPS, testing for staff sergeants and technical sergeants, Wright said.

The Air Force in February dropped WAPS testing [for active duty senior noncommissioned officers](#) in favor of a promotion board process. Air Force leaders said at the time that change was made to ensure performance is the top factor when choosing SNCOs. And Wright said earlier this year that dropping WAPS tests will help ensure that the wrong airmen don't wind up in leadership positions, just because they're good at taking tests.

Is it time for a new look at weight and recruitment standards? [Capt. Kira P. Heartwick, *Army Times*, 2019-09-11]

With nearly one in three young adults considered too overweight to enter into military service, would-be recruits are taking drastic measures to lose weight and join the military. They will find that the Army height and weight recruitment standards are actually far more lenient than standards for active duty service members.

A comparison of maximum allowable height, weight and [percent body fat](#) for new recruits as compared to the [standards for active duty Soldiers](#) shows the difference in standards. Male recruits, age group 17-20, may have up to 6% higher body fat and can weigh an average of 9 ½ pounds more than their active duty counterparts. Female recruits, age group 17-20, may have 2% more body fat and weigh an average of 4½ pounds more than active duty female Soldiers.

New recruits are given 180 days from the time they enter military service to achieve [the standards](#) expected for the active duty population. If they fail to do so, they are flagged and enrolled in the Army Body Composition Program where they may be chaptered out of the Army.

Leavitt: Less than 25 Percent of USAF's "Target Market" Is Eligible to Serve [Jennifer-Leigh Oprihory, *Air Force Magazine*, 2019-09-16]

Less than a quarter of American youth in the Air Force's "target market" actually qualify to serve, USAF Recruiting Service Commander Maj. Gen. Jeannie Leavitt told reporters Sept. 16.

Of the 4.4 million potential recruits who make this cut, she said, only "a small subset" is actually interested in joining the US Armed Forces—a demographic the service refers to as being "propensed." But she said she believes education is the key to attracting a larger portion of the 4.4 million, blaming "a lack of knowledge or...awareness" for their disinterest.

To illustrate this point, she discussed a survey that asked individuals between the ages of 17 and 35 to name the four US military services; less than half of respondents could complete the task. If 51 percent of that population was unfamiliar with the services, she said "the odds that they're gonna know the difference between Active, Guard, Reserve, Academy, [and] ROTC" are "very slim."

‘Ned Stark’ takes the stage at AFA; a remarkably candid discussion of leadership ensues [Stephen Losey, *Air Force Times*, 2019-09-19]

The Air Force officer who stormed the internet under the pseudonym “Col. Ned Stark” closed out the Air Force Association’s annual conference Wednesday with a freewheeling discussion about the service’s culture — and how to fix it.

“I think many of your peers think you’ve lost your mind, putting me up here without any rules,” [Col. Jason Lamb](#) told Lt. Gen. Brian Kelly in a tongue-in-cheek fashion after taking the stage at the Air Space Cyber conference in National Harbor, Maryland. “And if you weren’t looking for candor, you picked the wrong guy.”

Over the next 45 minutes, Lamb and Kelly touched on everything from how officers are rated and promoted, to the way one mistake on something as small as a PT test can derail a good airman’s career, while other officers have wrongdoing swept under the rug and grow to become toxic leaders.

SecDef enlists governors’ help on military spouse employment issue [Karen Jowers, *Military Times*, 2019-09-20]

Secretary of Defense Mark Esper has asked for Council of Governors’ help in easing the burden of thousands of military spouses when they’re trying to transfer occupational licenses from state to state.

*About 34 percent of the roughly 300,000 (a *Military Times* estimate) military spouses in the work force are employed in fields that require a license or certification, according to the Department of Labor. These occupations range from cosmetologists, to teachers, to attorneys and nurses. Spouses often face [burdensome](#) and [expensive](#) requirements when they move to a new state, because of different local and state licensing regulations. A number of states have taken steps to ease the process in some occupations, such as allowing temporary licensing, and expediting the application processes -- helping spouses get into jobs more quickly.*

When Esper was Secretary of the Army, he and the other service secretaries wrote a joint letter to the National Governors Association, saying they would encourage military leaders to consider the quality of schools near bases, and whether reciprocity of professional licenses is available for military spouses, when making decisions about future basing or mission alternatives.

Senior VA leaders disciplined after ant infestation at nursing home [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 2019-09-17]

Veterans Affairs officials are disciplining nine department workers—including the regional director for three southeastern states—in response to [ant-infested conditions](#) at a department-run community center in Georgia uncovered earlier this month.

“What happened at (the community center) was unacceptable, and we want to ensure that veterans and families know we are determined to restore their trust in the facility,” [Dr. Richard Stone](#), executive in charge of the Veterans Health Administration, said in a statement. “Transparency and accountability are key principles at VA, and they will guide our efforts in this regard.”

Last week, lawmakers reacted with horror at local news reports that at least three patients suffered injuries from numerous insect bites at the Eagle’s Nest Community Living Center near Atlanta. The family of one veteran (who later died from unrelated causes) said their complaints about the conditions were met with apathy from center staff.

[Servicemembers are warned to lay off vaping amid reports of lung illnesses linked to e-cigarettes](#) [Chad Garland, *Stars & Stripes*, 2019-09-16]

Servicemembers are being told to avoid vaping after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the habit may be linked to hundreds of cases of severe lung disease, and at least six deaths, in dozens of states.

The Army Public Health Center issued an alert last week warning soldiers and family members to avoid all electronic cigarette and vaping products, “particularly those sold off the street or modified to add any substances not intended by the manufacturer.”

Troops and their loved ones may want to discontinue using products including e-cigarettes, e-hookahs, vape pens and electronic nicotine delivery systems until the CDC completes its investigation, the Defense Health Agency said in a post on Thursday.

SEE ALSO:

[Why DOD should start asking recruits whether they vape](#) [Military Times, 2019-09-13]

[Soldier’s lawsuit dismissed after claim she was forced to take anthrax vaccinations that made her sick](#) [Kyle Rempfer, *Army Times*, 2019-09-13]

A [soldier’s lawsuit](#) against the U.S. government was dismissed Thursday after she alleged that she was forced to take the [anthrax vaccine](#) three times, despite experiencing flu-like symptoms and vomiting after the first two shots.

The soldier, 35-year-old chemical specialist Emel Bosh, claims that after the third vaccination, which she protested taking, she had seizures for days afterwards and had to go to the emergency room, according to the lawsuit.

The U.S. government filed a motion to dismiss the lawsuit, arguing that “a long line of binding precedent” establishes that active duty personnel are effectively barred from collecting damages from the U.S. government for personal injuries incurred while performing their duties, according to the court filings.

[Student loan crisis, not Mideast wars, helped Army leaders exceed recruiting goals this year](#) [Kyle Rempfer, *Army Times*, 2019-09-17]

Army leadership gathered Tuesday to announce that they surpassed their [recruiting goal for 2019](#), signing up more than 68,000 [active duty soldiers](#) before the end of the fiscal year, but the long wars in the Middle East weren’t exactly part of the sales pitch.

Based on his experience visiting 30 to 40 recruiting stations this year, the eventual outcomes of wars abroad are “not really part of the discussion” between potential soldiers and their recruiters, Maj. Gen. Frank Muth, head of Army Recruiting Command, told reporters at the Pentagon Tuesday.

“One of the national crises right now is student loans, so \$31,000 is [about] the average,” Muth said. “You can get out [of the Army] after four years, 100 percent paid for state college anywhere in the United States.”

[Study explores the idea of allowing some military reservists to work from home or be non-deployable](#) [Meghann Myers, *Military Times*, 2019-09-13]

The [military's reserve component](#) has a chronic under-manning problem. A new [report from RAND Corp.](#) suggests [some ways to fix that](#), including some ideas that would rock the traditional structure of military service, even for part-timers.

What if some reservists could be [non-deployable](#)? What if some could work from home, on their computers? What if some worked more than their required one weekend a month, two weeks a year? These are some of the suggestions for plugging those personnel gaps, making reserve service more flexible and attractive to a diminishing number of Americans who qualify in the first place.

The study presents nine “workforce constructs” that would disrupt how the services’ reserve components and the National Guard operate. They include ideas like telework, part-time activation and even a warrant officer program for chaplains, freeing uniformed religious leaders from the workload of military officers and making joining up more attractive to civilian clergy.

[‘Total force’ recruiting aims to help prospective airmen envision all the ways they can serve](#) [Stephen Losey, *Air Force Times*, 2019-09-17]

The Air Force is trying to break down the walls between [how it recruits](#) active-duty, Air National Guard and Air Reserve airmen as it moves to a new “total force recruiting” strategy.

“It’s far more effective if we [recruit to the United States Air Force](#) and all the different ways you can serve,” said Maj. Gen. Jeannie Leavitt, commander of the [Air Force Recruiting Service](#), during a roundtable with reporters Monday. “Full or part-time, in or out of uniform. ... We want to make it less confusing, how to join the Air Force.”

Total force recruiting will help a recruiter find the best fit for potential recruit, she said — not just whether to go active, Guard or Reserve, but also whether to enlist or become an officer, or whether to work for the Air Force as a civilian.

[West Point has changed how cadets are assigned branches—ROTC will soon follow](#) [Kyle Rempfer, *Army Times*, 2019-09-13]

[West Point](#)’s class of 2020 will serve as the first users of a new branch assignment system this fall, which the Army hopes will help with the [retention of junior officers](#) and better assign talent.

The Army is rolling out a new “Market Model branching system” that takes input from the commandants of each branch, who rank cadets as “most preferred,” “preferred” or “least preferred,” according to an [Army news posting](#).

Cadets will be judged based on a range of factors, including test scores, physical fitness scores, transcripts, personal statements and, for the first time, interviews with the branches they’re interested in.

MISCONDUCT

[13 Marine Lance Corporals Charged in Connection with Major Human Smuggling Scheme](#) [Gina Harkins, *Military.com*, 2019-09-20]

More than a dozen California-based infantry [Marines](#) are headed to military court over their alleged roles in a widespread effort to smuggle people into the U.S. from Mexico.

The 13 junior Marines, all of whom are based at [Camp Pendleton](#) about 65 miles from the Mexico border, have been formally charged for violating the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Charges include: failure to obey an order, drunkenness, endangerment offenses, larceny, perjury and violating a general article.

Nine of the Marines were charged with general article violations. Marine officials said on Friday that all of those violations “refer specifically to alleged transporting and/or conspiring to transport undocumented immigrants.”

Troops typically face general article violations when their alleged crimes don’t fit into other sections of the UCMJ.

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All but two of those 27 service members had been formally investigated and 18 service members were disciplined or [separated](#) from the military, the DOD said.

The letter from the Pentagon, dated Aug. 24, 2018, was sent to Ellison in response to his request for information related to [supremacist](#) and [extremist](#) activity across the military.

Alabama man arrested in terrorism probe [Jeff Martin, *The Associated Press*, 2019-09-18]

An Alabama man has been apprehended as part of a yearslong terrorism probe in which the FBI says he told agents he would execute a U.S. soldier if ordered to do so by the Islamic State group.

FBI agents took Nayef Qashou into custody Monday. He’s charged with lying to the FBI and destroying records.

Qashou is a dual Jordanian and United States citizen who grew up in Saudi Arabia, authorities said.

Fired helo squadron CO bound for the brig [Geoff Ziezulewicz, *Navy Times*, 2019-09-17]

A former helicopter squadron commander has pleaded guilty to assaulting a fellow officer and will spend a year behind bars, officials confirmed this week.

Before his plea deal, [Cmdr. John M. Neuhart](#) faced charges of attempted rape and sexual assault, plus specifications involving him secretly recording a female lieutenant’s residence and fleeing from San Diego police when they arrived there, according to charge sheets.

He’s been dogged by misconduct allegations since a boozy Sept. 12, 2016 night out in San Diego with the unnamed subordinate.

Fired Marine recon commander accused of abuse in military charge sheets [Shawn Snow, *Marine Corps Times*, 2019-09-18]

A [recon commander](#) sacked in May allegedly struck an individual in the face and was accused of inflicting psychological and emotional abuse, among other accusations, according to details in a charge sheet.

*The victim of Lt. Col. Francisco X. Zavala’s alleged abuse is believed to be his wife, but the charge sheet obtained by *Marine Corps Times* from the Marine Corps upon request, redacted the name.*

The lieutenant colonel will face an Article 32 hearing in early October for charges of allegedly committing assault, making a false official statement, waste or destruction of non-military property and conduct unbecoming an officer, according to Maj. Kendra Motz, a Marine spokeswoman.

[Is military domestic violence a ‘forgotten crisis’?](#) [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 2019-09-18]

House lawmakers are blasting defense officials for allowing [domestic abuse](#) to become “a forgotten crisis” in the military, saying not enough has been done to protect victims, [punish attackers](#) or even track the issue.

Domestic violence has only been a crime under the Uniform Code of Military Justice for a few months, after lawmakers added it as part of last year’s defense authorization bill. Before that, offenses were prosecuted under a patchwork of other regulations, which advocates said severely restricted the services’ ability to track and monitor the problem.

Earlier this year, the Defense Department Inspector General found that military response to domestic violence cases were inconsistent, with service law enforcement frequently making mistakes in processing crime scenes and infrequently informing victims of support services.

SEE ALSO:

[Commands Protect Troops and Fail Families in Domestic Abuse Cases, Victims Say](#) [Military.com, 02019-09-19]

[Lawmaker blasts VA for ‘second chance’ given to VA doctor found drunk on the job](#) [Nikki Wentling, *Stars & Stripes*, 2019-09-10]

Rep. Steve Womack, R-Ark., urged the House Committee on Veterans Affairs on Tuesday to investigate how the Department of Veterans Affairs handled the case of a pathologist in Fayetteville, Ark., who is accused of misdiagnosing patients while he was intoxicated on the job.

*Robert Levy, 53, the former chief pathologist at the Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks, was indicted last month on three counts of involuntary manslaughter and 28 counts of mail fraud, wire fraud and false statements to law enforcement officials. His misdiagnoses totaled more than 3,000 cases and were responsible for at least 15 deaths, *The Washington Post* reported.*

Levy was found in 2016 to have a blood alcohol level of 0.396% while at work, five times the legal limit in Arkansas of 0.08%. He was suspended but returned to his position after completing a three-month treatment program and agreeing to random drug and alcohol screenings.

[Marines clear XO fired from the Navy’s Gladiators](#) [Navy Times Staff, *Navy Times*, 2019-09-14]

An elated Lt. Col. Michael C. “Sham” Nesbitt learned Friday that the Marine Corps had reversed an earlier finding that he restricted a whistleblower from talking to the Inspector General, clearing the way for him to retire honorably at his present pay grade.

The ruling by Marine Corps Training Command rescinds any report of officer misconduct, which would’ve sent Nesbitt to a board of inquiry to determine whether he conducted himself honorably. An adverse ruling by the tribunal could’ve forced him to exit the service as a major after 22 years of service.

Instead, Friday’s announcement by the staff of Brig. Gen. Jason Morris was another blow to a Pentagon IG investigation that’s been decried by dozens of military aviators as unfair and riddled with factual errors

since its June 12 release, according to internal Navy and Marine Corps documents provided to *Navy Times*.

Overseas trolls targeting veterans on social media: Report [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 2019-09-17]

Foreign agitators continue to target American veterans through a complex network of [fraudulent social media pages](#) mimicking well-known service groups and brands, officials from Vietnam Veterans of America warned in [a new report released Tuesday](#).

“Their goals are to perpetrate financial fraud, spread anti-American propaganda, manipulate the online public community spaces and sow discord by exploiting and inflaming national divisions,” the VVA analysis states.

The findings are part of a wide-ranging report on the influence of foreign groups on [the U.S. veterans community](#), the culmination of more than two years of work by the group. Author Kris Goldsmith, chief investigator and associate director for policy and government affairs at VVA, said the report should serve as a wake-up call for law enforcement and the American public.

SEXUAL ASSAULT/HARASSMENT

Former San Diego sailor receives 20-year sentence for sex crimes against a minor [Andrew Dyer, *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, 2019-09-17]

A former U.S. Navy sailor was sentenced to 20 years in prison Monday for having sexual contact with a 14-year-old Oceanside girl in 2017, federal prosecutors in San Diego said in a statement.

Isaiah B. Smallwood-Jackson, 23, was accused in September 2017 of sexual assault. He was a 21-year old Navy master-at-arms 3rd class assigned to the security detachment at Naval Base San Diego at the time of his arrest.

Prosecutors say Smallwood-Jackson began chatting with a then-14-year-old on Spotafriend, a teens-only mobile app whose terms of service do not allow users over the age of 19. To get around this, Smallwood-Jackson listed his age as 17, prosecutors said in a statement.

Fugitive ex-priest sentenced to 30 years in sex abuse case [Morgan Lee and Mary Hudetz, *The Associated Press*, 2019-09-13]

A former Roman Catholic priest who fled the country decades ago was sentenced Friday in New Mexico to 30 years in prison after a jury found him guilty of sexually abusing an altar boy at a veterans' cemetery and military base.

Prosecutors had asked the judge for special consideration of a life sentence for Perrault, once a pastor at an Albuquerque parish and a chaplain at Kirtland Air Force Base.

He was convicted in April of six counts of aggravated sexual abuse and one count of abusive sexual contact with a minor under 12.

The VA is investigating allegations that one of its physicians sexually assaulted ‘more than a dozen’ patients [James Clark, *Task & Purpose*, 2019-09-09]

A Veterans Affairs medical center in West Virginia is being investigated over allegations that one of its physicians sexually assaulted more than a dozen patients.

The VA Office of Inspector General is working with federal law enforcement to investigate allegations of sexual assault at the Beckley VA Medical Center, [according to](#) a statement put out by the IG on Monday.

The news comes just weeks after the [VA Inspector General's Office announced](#) that it was investigating a string of suspicious deaths at another VA Medical Center in West Virginia, one of which was deemed a homicide.