

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.

After reports of drill instructor misconduct, Marine Corps says efforts to crack down are showing results [Andrew Dyer, *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, 21 October 2019]

- The Marines say changes in the way they train recruits and their notoriously hard-nosed drill instructors have led to fewer incidents of drill instructor misconduct, officials told the Union-Tribune.
- Their statement about training followed an Oct. 5 [Washington Post report](#) revealing that more than 20 Marines at the San Diego boot camp have been disciplined for misconduct since 2017, including cases of physical attacks and racist and homophobic slurs. The story also was published in the Union-Tribune.
- Marine Capt. Martin Harris, [a Marine Corps Recruit Depot] San Diego spokesman, said that from August 2018 through September 2019, there was a 64 percent decrease in substantiated allegations of drill instructor misconduct. While Harris did not go into detail about those cases, most were minor and did not warrant significant punishment, he said.

[After reports of drill instructor misconduct, Marine Corps says efforts to crack down are showing results](#)

Tragedies deepen Jewish-Muslim bonds to fight hate crimes [Elana Schor, *The Associated Press*, 23 October 2019]

- Muslim groups helped raise hundreds of thousands of dollars to help Pittsburgh's Tree of Life synagogue recover after a gunman killed 11 people there, one year ago this week. The Jewish congregation [mounted its own](#) fundraiser for New Zealand's Muslims after a White supremacist shooter killed 51 people at two mosques there in March.
- Such outreach between Jews and Muslims often draws widespread attention only in the immediate wake of tragedy. But as both faiths grapple with a rise in reported hate crimes and fears within their communities of being attacked for their beliefs, Jews and Muslims are forging bonds that rely on shared personal values to help combat anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.
- Hate crimes reported to the FBI have risen for three years running, according to official statistics, with Jews and Muslims ranking as the top two targets of religiously motivated incidents. But underreporting is seen as a significant obstacle to effective tracking of the problem. Heyer's death, for example, was not included in the federal database although the man who drove his car into the crowd where she stood [pleaded guilty](#) to hate crimes charges.

[Tragedies deepen Jewish-Muslim bonds to fight hate crimes](#)

VA office charged with protecting whistleblowers hurts them instead, investigators say [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 24 October 2019]

- A Veterans Affairs office set up [specifically to help whistleblowers](#) "floundered in its mission" and "created an office culture that was sometimes alienating to those it was meant to protect," according to a new report from the department's inspector general.
- Administration officials, however, criticized the report as a one-sided look at the [Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection](#), saying investigators failed to note significant changes from past VA administrations in responding to whistleblower complaints and [improvements with the office](#) over the last two years.
- Investigators say the new office—established in April 2017 by executive order and later mandated by the VA Accountability Act passed by Congress—has misinterpreted its own role and rules, "accepting matters that it should not have and declining matters the Act requires it to investigate."

[VA office charged with protecting whistleblowers hurts them instead, investigators say](#)

DISCRIMINATION

Puget Sound Naval Shipyard settles lawsuit with worker who alleged retaliation for reporting harassment [Josh Farley, *Kitsap Sun (Bremerton, Washington)*, 2019-10-17]

A shipyard worker's 3 1/2-year battle to expose sexual harassment and retaliation he received for trying to report it at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard has ended in federal court.

Mark Swalley, a 33-year federal employee and former supervisor, has settled his case with lawyers for the Navy for \$130,000. But it's not about the money, he said.

"The money will not cause things to change," Swalley, 57, said Thursday. "It's going to take coverage of these issues and leadership at the shipyard. That's going to make me heal in a way money never can."

His case and subsequent federal suit predate harassment and discrimination claims [published on social media in September](#) by a female employee, ones that have reverberated around the shipyard and led to promised reforms under new leader Capt. Dianna Wolfson. Asked if the shipyard settled the suit as part of the new emphasis on the problem by Wolfson, a spokesman said that "a number of factors" led to its conclusion, "as with any litigation."

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DIVERSITY

General: Army's JROTC Needs Tech Programs, Diversity [Alec Bose, *Military.com*, 2019-10-18]

The [Army](#) must invest in STEM education and interactive learning for its JROTC programs to ensure the next generation of recruits have the knowledge and skills to succeed, Brig. Gen. John Evans said at the Association of the United States Army annual meeting in Washington, D.C., on Wednesday.

The AUSA show floor was full of vendors marketing the future of military equipment and software. Evans, however, focused on the future of recruiting and how the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps program, aimed at high schoolers, should adapt to global changes.

He also said the Army needs to recruit more people from different backgrounds.

'Nice girls don't join the military': New Fairchild commander proves her mettle—and critics wrong [Jared Brown, *The Spokesman-Review (Spokane, Wash.)*, 2019-10-20]

[Cindy] Dawson graduated in the top of her class at the Air Force Academy in 2005, then trained to be a KC-135 Stratotanker pilot. While deployed to Qatar in 2009, she was the co-pilot in one of the first all-female KC-135 flight crews.

And on Friday, more than 1,700 KC-135 flight hours later, the airmen of Fairchild Air Force Base's newly reactivated 97th Air Refueling Squadron saluted their new commander during an assumption of command ceremony: Lt. Col. Dawson.

The new commander of the fourth squadron in Fairchild's 92nd Air Refueling Wing, the largest force of air refueling tankers in the world, had her grandfather's pilot wings pinned to her chest when she officially took her charge.

MISCELLANEOUS

10 years after its passage, there's a lot we can do to build on the Hate Crimes Prevention Act [Sim J. Singh, *The Hill*, 2019-10-21] [OPINION]

Ten years ago, the United States took a significant step forward in our response to hate crimes. The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, [passed in 2009](#), widened the scope of what can be considered a hate crime and expanded their definition to include motivations based on the actual or perceived gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability of the victim. It also increased funding to state and local agencies for investigating hate crimes, expanded the federal government's abilities to do the same, and bolstered the FBI's tracking requirements.

According to the FBI, hate crimes have been [on the rise](#) in the United States for the last three years, yet even these alarming numbers are tempered by a [chronic, well-documented](#) underreporting problem. And we know from what we see and hear every day in our society—from shootings targeting ethnic and religious groups to ugly rhetoric in our political discourse—that hate remains a pressing threat.

So how do we build on the legacy of the Shepard and Byrd Act? At the federal level, we need to pass the next generation of common-sense legislation that equips law enforcement to identify and track hate incidents. The [Khalid Jabara-Heather Heyer NO HATE Act](#), named for two victims ([Khalid Jabara, killed in 2016](#), and Heather Heyer, killed in 2017) who were excluded from hate crime statistics due to poor data collection and reporting practices, would modernize hate crime reporting and increase both assistance and resources available for other victims. At a time when White nationalism and xenophobia weigh heavily on the minds of all Americans, this bipartisan measure is a wise move to give our nation a fighting chance against hate.

AP-NORC poll: Most Americans oppose reparations for slavery [Corey Williams and Noreen Nasir, *The Associated Press*, 2019-10-25]

Only 29% of Americans say the government should pay cash reparations, according to the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll.

But the poll reveals a large divide between Americans of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Most Black Americans, 74%, favor reparations, compared with 15% of White Americans. Among Hispanics, 44% favor reparations.

Poll respondents also were sharply divided by race on whether the U.S. government should issue an apology for slavery: 64% of White Americans oppose a government apology, while 77% of Black Americans and 64% of Hispanics believe an apology is due. Overall, 46% of Americans favor and 52% oppose a national apology.

[Army Needs More Money to Fix Housing Problems, Leaders Say](#) [Richard Sisk, *Military.com*, 2019-10-20]

The Army's top brass say they're committed to fixing major problems in privatized military family housing and barracks facilities, but can only do so much without another infusion of cash.

Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy told an audience at the Association of the [United States Army's annual meeting](#) this week that the firms that own and manage private family housing have committed \$500 million to address immediate needs, but have to come up with more.

Army Chief of Staff Gen. Joseph McConville added that the Army has spent almost \$1 billion to repair barracks so far.

Leaders of all services have acknowledged a crisis in military housing following a series of investigative reports earlier this year that [revealed military family residences infested with mold, vermin](#) and other problems. Some families said these issues had led to life-altering health conditions.

[Navy's Fitness Test Overhaul Enters Next Phase](#) [Gina Harkins, *Military.com*, 2019-10-24]

Sailors in Hawaii volunteered for some extra physical training this month as part of a study that will help the Navy set scoring tables on new fitness test events.

About 150 sailors spent several days in Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam's fitness center this month, where they were observed using rowing machines and doing forearm planks. The plank will replace sit-ups on the Navy Readiness Test in 2020. Sailors will also get the option to row their way through the cardio portion of the test.

The assessment in Hawaii marked the first part of a months-long study that will wrap up in April 2020, said Cmdr. Dave Hecht, a spokesman for the Chief of Naval Personnel. The service expects to produce a finalized technical report that sets the new scoring rules after the study is completed, he said.

[Unemployment, Underemployment Persist Among Military Spouses: Panel](#) [C. Todd Lopez, *Military.com*, 2019-10-21]

Mike Haynie, the executive director of the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University, said spouse unemployment, and the financial burden it brings, has already changed military families.

He also said unemployment for military spouses is higher than for their civilian peers, as is underemployment.

Marcus Beauregard, director of the State Liaison Office within the Defense Department, said military families, like families in the civilian community, increasingly need a dual income to survive. If military service proves an impediment to that survival, he said, a family may opt to discontinue that commitment.

MISCONDUCT

[After reports of drill instructor misconduct, Marine Corps says efforts to crack down are showing results](#) [Andrew Dyer, *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, 2019-10-21]

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[Air Force swimmers, with courts-martial dropped from 2017 hazing, fight to stay in uniform](#) [Tom Roeder, *The Gazette (Colorado Springs, Colo.)*, 2019-10-20]

Two years after what Air Force Academy leaders call a hazing incident on the school's swimming team, three cadets are still fighting to become officers after administrative expulsions followed the school dropping criminal charges.

It was the first hazing case involving criminal charges in school history, and a lengthy investigation offered a rare glimpse behind the fence that separates cadets from Colorado Springs and into how justice at the elite school is carried out.

Attorneys for the cadets, in getting the criminal charges dropped, made claims of misconduct by officers, including the school's top generals. They also alleged that the swimmers were singled out for harsh treatment that included charges of attempted conspiracy to obstruct justice while a more significant hazing incident involving members of the lacrosse team—allegedly slamming textbooks closed on freshmen's genitalia—resulted in slapped wrists.

['Executing the plan'—How a CO's warship romance got him canned](#) [Geoff Ziezulewicz, *Navy Times*, 2019-10-23]

The commanding officer of the guided-missile destroyer [Hopper](#) was fired last year after his shipboard romance with a petty officer was revealed, according to an internal investigation obtained by Navy Times.

[Cmdr. Jeffrey S. Tamulevich](#) was removed from his post on May 21, 2018.

In the months before his relief, Tamulevich hosted a series of sexual liaisons with a second class petty officer, showing her favoritism that troubled other leaders on board the Hawaii-based ship, the probe determined.

[NCIS: Drug ring's tentacles reached at least 48 service members](#) [Geoff Ziezulewicz, *Navy Times*, 2019-10-21]

Military prosecutors sent two San Diego-based petty officers [to the brig](#) in January for using and dealing a boatload of drugs.

But while the extent of their illicit moonlighting remained unclear at the time, an internal probe obtained by Navy Times reveals “a considerable number” of active-duty sailors and Marines relied on the drug-dealing duo for cocaine, hallucinogenic mushrooms, LSD and MDMA, a mood-altering substance better known by street names [Ecstasy](#), [Extasy](#) or [Molly](#).

At least 45 sailors stationed in San Diego County were suspected of having bought drugs from Hull Maintenance Technician 2nd Class Casey T. Balausky and Interior Communications Specialist 2nd Class Tyler D. Farley before an undercover sting last year sparked [guilty pleas](#).

A military judge sentenced Balausky to 34 months in the brig and a bad conduct discharge, while Farley received two years behind bars, a \$250 fine and a bad conduct discharge.

RELIGION

[Congregations, community to commemorate synagogue shooting](#) [Ramesh Santanam, *The Associated Press*, 2019-10-25]

A virtual remembrance, an overseas concert and community service projects highlight the many plans for commemorating the deadliest attack on Jews in U.S. history on the shooting's one-year anniversary Sunday.

The attack killed 11 worshippers and wounded seven at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh's Squirrel Hill neighborhood.

The Tree of Life building has remained closed since the shooting. The three congregations now worship at two nearby synagogues. Last week, Tree of Life leaders [unveiled their vision](#) for the damaged building: a rebuilt space for places of worship; memorial, education and social events; and classrooms and exhibitions.

[Report: Synagogue massacre led to string of attack plots](#) [Michael Kunzelman, *The Associated Press*, 2019-10-21]

At least 12 White supremacists have been arrested on allegations of plotting, threatening or carrying out anti-Semitic attacks in the U.S. since the massacre at a Pittsburgh synagogue nearly one year ago, a Jewish civil rights group reported Sunday.

The Anti-Defamation League also counted at least 50 incidents in which White supremacists are accused of targeting Jewish institutions' property since a gunman killed 11 worshippers at the Tree of Life synagogue on Oct. 27, 2018. Those incidents include 12 cases of vandalism involving White supremacist symbols and 35 cases in which White supremacist propaganda was distributed.

The ADL said its nationwide count of anti-Semitic incidents remains near record levels. It has counted 780 anti-Semitic incidents in the first six months of 2019, compared to 785 incidents during the same period in 2018.

SEE ALSO:

[We've already seen 780 anti-Semitic incidents this year and it's 'horrifying,' group says](#) [USA TODAY, 2019-10-21]

[Tragedies deepen Jewish-Muslim bonds to fight hate crimes](#) [Elana Schor, *The Associated Press*, 2019-10-23]

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SEXUAL ASSAULT/HARASSMENT

11 men, many in the military, attacked or sexually assaulted in NC city, police say [Simone Jasper, *The News & Observer* (Raleigh, N.C.), 2019-10-18]

Eleven men have been assaulted near bars in Wilmington, prompting police to warn those who go out drinking late at night.

The men, including seven members of the military, were [attacked in downtown Wilmington](#) in Eastern North Carolina around the time bars closed for the night, the city's police department said Wednesday in a Facebook post.

"Police have now identified four victims who may have been sexually assaulted," officials say.

AP-NORC/SAP poll: Some workers changing actions amid #MeToo [Michelle R. Smith and Hannah Fingerhut, *The Associated Press*, 2019-10-22]

[Electrician Barbara] Myers is among the roughly one-third of American workers who say they've changed how they act at work in the past year, as [the #MeToo movement](#) has focused the nation's attention on sexual misconduct and highlighted issues of racial and ethnic diversity at the same time, according to a new poll of Americans who are full- or part-time employees.

The survey, conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research in collaboration with the software company SAP, also found that about a third of all working adults say they have talked about sexual misconduct in the workplace with coworkers in the past year.

The poll finds American workers view the #MeToo movement more favorably than unfavorably, 45% versus 27%. Half of women had a favorable opinion, compared with 4 in 10 men; just over 3 in 10 men view the movement unfavorably.

Sailor charged with sexually abusing shipmates while they slept [Courtney Mabeus, *Navy Times*, 2019-10-18]

A Navy sailor sexually abused three male shipmates on board the guided-missile destroyer Laboon while they were sleeping, military prosecutors allege.

Interior Communications Electrician 3rd Class Kyrick Lee is accused of touching his shipmates' genitalia through their clothing in April 2017 and again in February and June of 2018, according to charge sheets provided to the Navy Times.

Released in May, the Defense Department's [fiscal 2018 report on unwanted sexual contact](#) found that 6.2 percent of active duty women and a little less than 1 percent of active duty men had experienced a sexual assault.

[What 33 universities learned about sexual violence in a new survey](#) [Nick Anderson and Susan Svrluga, *The Washington Post*, 2019-10-22]

This month, a group of major research universities published another groundbreaking study that established in stark detail the scope of sexual assault and misconduct on campuses and how students perceive the response to the problem.

In 2015, the Association of American Universities collected data from more than 150,000 students at 27 schools in a confidential online survey that was at the time the largest of its kind. This year the AAU heard from more than 180,000 students at 33 schools.

Overall, the latest findings confirm anew that a significant share of college students experience nonconsensual sexual contact — through touching or penetration — and sexually harassing behavior. Here is [a link to coverage](#) of the study.

SUICIDE

[VA Partners with Guard Organization for Suicide Prevention](#) [Jim Absher, *Military.com*, 2019-10-24]

The Department of Veterans Affairs and the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States ([EANGUS](#)) have formed a partnership to give Guard members access to the VA's suicide prevention tools.

Normally, National Guard members don't qualify for VA health care benefits unless they completed active-duty service under federal orders, had combat duty or suffered an injury in the line of duty.

"This collaboration will provide access to VA-developed education resources for current and former National Guard members who otherwise do not qualify for VA services, especially when it comes to mental wellness, substance use struggles and necessary emotional support," said EANGUS Executive Director Frank Yoakum, a retired U.S. Army sergeant major.

[Why the military should treat mental health the same as physical health](#) [Sloan Fischer and Thomas Weisner, *Military Times*, 2019-10-22] [OPINION]

There is an unavoidable feeling of distrust for service members regarding mental health services. According to the Department of Defense Suicide Prevention (DODSER) 2017 annual report, there were 1,397 non-fatal suicide attempts by active-duty service members. Over half of the members who were lost to suicide had seen a health care professional within the previous 90 days. These statistics illustrate the number of people that the system missed that were in crisis yet didn't speak up and ask for help. Current policies will continue to fail soldiers, airmen, sailors and Marines until there is a change in how mental health is reported and trust in the system is secured. The risk of losing any more service members is too significant to ignore.

If you had a broken leg, you would report to the medic, who might put you on quarters and develop an appropriate work plan so that you could heal. Should we not treat mental health the same way? The mental health professionals seeing activity-duty members should report the member's status directly to the

providers at the base's medical facilities. The physician and the mental health provider can then devise an appropriate care plan. Treating mental health with the "no questions asked" attitude that physical health is treated is the only way to break the stigma and regain trust. The chain of reporting should be from the mental health professional to the medical clinic, who would then report the plan to a command team. This ensures more confidentiality and creates additional insight for a commander to make appropriate decisions about a service member's mental health.

According to the Defense Casualty Analysis System (DCAS), the three military campaigns since 2001 have resulted in 6,828 lives lost to combat; yet since 2006, over 3,400 active duty military members have died by their own hands. This number is almost half of the total losses that the enemy has inflicted on our armed forces. DOD policies have not gone far enough to establish trust in the military's mental health system. It is time to face the fact that service members are not getting the help they need for fear of consequences to their careers.

VETERANS

[VA Watchdog Calls Mishandling of Veterans' Personal Info a 'National Issue'](#)

[Dorothy Mills-Gregg, *Military.com*, 2019-10-18]

The [Department of Veterans Affairs'](#) Office of Inspector General found in its latest report that veterans' sensitive personal information was stored unprotected on two servers, which OIG staff say might expose vets to fraud and identity theft.

In a report released Thursday, OIG staff investigated a veterans service organization officer's complaint that medical records linked to veterans' names, Social Security numbers or date and place of birth were accessible remotely by anyone authorized to access the drives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin -- a violation of VA security policy.

The OIG labeled the problem a "national issue" because it found the problems stretched beyond the Milwaukee VA regional office.