

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.

Spurred by church shooting, Air Force replaces outdated '90s-era crime reporting system [Stephen Losey, *Air Force Times*, 2019-11-05]

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- The Air Force in 2017 began looking for a system to replace its '90s-era Security Forces Information System, and conducted a cost-benefit analysis that year. But the Nov. 5, 2017, shooting at the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas—in which a former airmen killed 26 people and wounded 22 more—prompted the Air Force to accelerate its procurement of the new system, Air Force spokesman Robert Leese said in an email Monday.
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[Spurred by church shooting, Air Force replaces outdated '90s-era crime reporting system](#)

Trump's 'conscience' rule for healthcare workers struck down by U.S. judge [Jonathan Stempel, *Reuters*, 2019-11-6]

- A federal judge on Wednesday voided a White House-backed rule making it easier for doctors, nurses, and other healthcare providers to avoid performing abortions and other medical services on religious or moral grounds.
- U.S. District Judge Paul Engelmayer in Manhattan said the “conscience” rule was unconstitutionally coercive because it would let the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) withhold billions of dollars of funding from hospitals, clinics, universities, and other healthcare providers that did not comply.
- HHS countered that the rule would help enforce conscience protection laws that have been on the books for decades.

[Trump's 'conscience' rule for healthcare workers struck down by U.S. judge](#)

White House declares all of November as Veterans and Military Families month [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 2019-11-1]

- As he has for each of the last two years, President Donald Trump issued a proclamation declaring all of [November as a month to honor American veterans](#) and military families in an effort to extend traditional Veterans Day celebrations.
- In the message, Trump urged communities to “honor the service, sacrifices, and contributions of veterans and military families for what they have done and for what they do every day to support our great nation.”
- Veterans Affairs officials have events scheduled throughout the month to highlight military and veterans issues. Trump is also expected to take part in events to honor veterans on Nov. 11.

[White House declares all of November as Veterans and Military Families month](#)

CULTURE

[Heritage of resistance: Reenactment to honor slave rebellion](#) [Rebecca Santana, *The Associated Press*, 2019-11-05]

Against the modern backdrop of oil refineries, strip malls and gated communities, hundreds of reenactors will gather Friday in southeastern Louisiana to remember a time when slavery flourished as a blight on America and some enslaved people fought back.

They plan to [reenact the largest slave rebellion](#) in American history.

Dressed in period costumes and holding machetes or rifles they will march 26 miles (42 kilometers) over two days from the sugar plantation country along the Mississippi River to the New Orleans suburbs.

[How Veterans Day was founded](#) [*Military Times*, 2019-11-05]

Soldiers have been held up as heroes as long as man has been at war. From biblical warriors to Greek gods and goddesses of war, there is no shortage of honor bestowed on those who vow to raise their swords against their enemies. So how did Nov. 11 become the one day of each year designated to appreciate the brave men and women across all wars who answered the call to serve? The simple answer is World War I.

The Great War, as it was previously called, ended at the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918. Veterans Day began under [President Woodrow Wilson](#) as “Armistice Day” one year later, on the first anniversary of the end of World War I, Nov. 11, 1919.

In his proclamation, Wilson stated, “...reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country’s service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations...”

It wasn’t until after World War II that the U.S. government changed the name to Veterans Day. In 1945, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, a former Army general, renamed Nov. 11, and, [by proclamation](#), designated it Veterans Day—a federal holiday.

SEE ALSO:

[Transcript: Veterans in America](#) [*The Washington Post*, 2019-11-06]

[Trump to attend New York City’s massive Veterans Day parade](#) [*Military Times*, 2019-11-06]

[Check out these Veterans Day deals on Amazon Prime, battlefield tours, plus free food and more](#) [*Military Times*, 2019-11-06]

[In fading ritual, WWII rescuer reunites with Jews she saved](#) [Aron Heller, *The Associated Press*, 2019-11-03]

One by one, the 40 descendants of a group of Israeli siblings leaned down and hugged the elderly Greek woman to whom they owe their very existence, as she sat in her wheelchair and wiped away tears streaking down her wrinkled face.

Clutching the hands of those she hid, fed and protected as a teenager more than 75 years ago, 92-year-old Melpomeni Dina said she could now “die quietly.”

Sunday’s emotional encounter was the first time Dina had met the offspring of the Mordechai family she helped save during the Holocaust. Once a regular ritual at Israel’s Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial, such gatherings are rapidly dwindling due to the advanced ages of both survivors and rescuers and may not happen again. The soon-to-be-extinct reunion is the latest reminder for Holocaust commemorators preparing for a post-survivor world.

About 6 million European Jews were killed by German Nazis and their collaborators during World War II. More than 27,000, including some 355 from Greece, have been recognized as “Righteous Among the Nations,” Israel’s highest honor to those non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust.

Marines lead the way in NYC’s 100th Veterans Day Parade with commandant as grand marshal [Philip Athey, *Marine Corps Times*, 2019-11-04]

Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger, as honorary grand marshal, will lead a contingent of Marines up New York City’s Fifth Avenue in the Big Apple’s 100th Veterans Day parade on Nov. 11.

The parade also will feature Army, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard units, according to a Monday press release.

Five official grand marshals will “represent every generation of American warrior from World War II through current post 9/11 service,” said a press release from the United War Veterans Council.

White House declares all of November as Veterans and Military Families month [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 2019-11-01]

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DISCRIMINATION

The intolerance of tolerance—America has gone too far [Allen Fagin, *The Hill*, 2019-11-06] [OPINION]

Anti-Semitism has always been a torment that Jews have been forced to reckon with for centuries. However, its resurgence both in the United States and abroad is alarming for a new reason.

The degree to which the mainstream of civil society has seemingly tolerated the most blatant acts of intolerance is alarming.

Not a day goes by without the report of anti-Semitic incidents in communities throughout America. This happens specifically in multiple Brooklyn neighborhoods, where acts of anti-Semitic violence against Orthodox Jews have become commonplace. Synagogue windows have been smashed and pedestrians were violently assaulted.

Civil society has, by its actions or its failures to act, enabled such conduct to slowly work its way beyond the fringes of our society, both left and right, and infiltrate the mainstream of our social fabric.

Pittsburgh and Poway are but examples — perhaps the most frightening and brutal examples — of a resurgent anti-Semitism that is engulfing our country.

DIVERSITY

[2 More Women Attempt Air Force Special Warfare Training Courses](#) [Oriana Pawlyk, *Military.com*, 2019-11-01]

Two more women are attempting to enter the U.S. [Air Force](#)'s combat controller and pararescue (PJ) battlefield airman career fields.

The women, who were not identified for privacy reasons, are the first to enter the official training pipelines of those career fields, according to 1st Lt. Jeremy Huggins, a spokesman for the Special Warfare Training Wing.

The two new candidates make the 10th and 11th women to attempt any type of battlefield courses under the Special Warfare Training Wing, and the 11th and 12th to express interest in the program since the Defense Department opened combat career fields to all in December 2015.

The battlefield airmen career fields are comprised of special tactics officer, combat rescue officer, combat controller, pararescue, special reconnaissance, TACP specialist and air liaison officer.

SEE ALSO:

[First female airman enters training pipeline to be combat controller](#) [*Air Force Times*, 2019-11-01]

[Air National Guard's 178th Wing gets 1st female commander](#) [*The Associated Press*, 2019-11-03]

The 178th Wing of the Ohio Air National Guard has its first female commander.

Col. Kimberly Fitzgerald assumed the 178th Wing's command from Col. Gregg Hesterman during a ceremony Sunday at the Springfield-Beckley Air National Guard Base in Springfield.

Fitzgerald previously served as the 178th Wing's vice commander. She has 26 years of service including more than 4,000 flight hours as a KC-135 navigator, a KC-135 pilot, MQ-1 Predator pilot, and MQ-9 Reaper pilot. She transferred to the 178th Wing in 2011 and served in other positions before becoming vice commander.

Fitzgerald said in a statement Sunday that she's "excited that all the women that are in this wing can see that they have a path."

MISCELLANEOUS

[Army veteran Duckworth introduces Senate bill to protect troops' families from deportation](#) [Meghann Myers, *Military Times*, 2019-11-06]

A group of Senate Democrats announced a proposed law Wednesday that would protect immediate family members of service members and veterans from being [deported](#), under certain circumstances.

The Military Family Parole in Place Act would reverse a 2019 Trump administration policy that directed [Homeland Security Department](#) officials to deny [special extensions of legal residency](#) that had been afforded to troops' families in the past.

Parole in place is a temporary legal residency designation that has been used specifically for undocumented immigrants whose family members are serving or have served. It delayed deportation proceedings on a year-long, renewable basis and allowed recipients to work.

While no specific numbers of those affected were immediately available, [past data of requests for military deportation relief](#) have numbered in more than 1,000 a year.

[Female Marines Get OK to Wear New Hairstyle and More Earring Choices](#) [Gina Harkins, *Military.com*, 2019-11-06]

Marines have been given the approval to let their hair down -- at least some of it -- while they work out.

Women with medium-length hair are now allowed to wear a "half ponytail" hairstyle during physical training. The style, which pulls the top portion of the hair away from the face and into a ponytail while the rest of the hair remains down -- is one of several new uniform-related changes the commandant signed off on this week.

Half ponytails are allowed only for female Marines with medium-length hair. The style is authorized during PT, including when the Marine Corps combat utility uniform is worn during physical training. Women with long hair will still need to put their hair up, in a regular ponytail or free-hanging braid.

[Here's why you need to speak your mind in this housing satisfaction survey](#) [Karen Jowers, *Military Times*, 2019-11-06]

Residents of Army housing: Watch your email inbox over the next few days for an online, confidential survey, asking you to rate the quality of your housing and housing services.

The surveys will be open through Dec. 13, and all surveys are confidential. Residents who haven't received an email with the survey link by Nov. 18 should contact their local housing office.

Earlier this year, in the wake of media reports and congressional testimony from military families about problems with mold, lead paint, water leaks, pest infestations and the lack of response from their privatized housing manager to address the problem, the service officials began a concerted effort to address the problems.

These surveys are one tool the services are using to get better feedback from their residents.

[Lone living Medal of Honor recipient from Iraq wants more recognition for the heroes of that fight](#) [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 2019-11-06]

Army Staff Sgt. David Bellavia is the only living recipient of the Medal of Honor for actions in the Iraq War, and he doesn't know why.

Since 2001, only six men have received the nation's highest military honor for battlefield actions in Iraq, and all but Bellavia were killed in action. In contrast, 18 Medals of Honor have been awarded for valor in Afghanistan, 14 to living recipients.

When asked why he thinks the two wars have been treated differently for military medals, Bellavia blamed public perception of the wars.

"When we came home and everyone started asking where we served ... for Afghanistan, (the response) was 'thank you for your service.' For Iraq, it was 'I'm so sorry.' That's garbage. That's shameful. We don't put policy before the valor of a generation. I believe there are a lot of people who wanted to forget Iraq and not think of it again."

[Marines Can Now Use Umbrellas Instead of Just Holding them Up for Presidents](#) [Gina Harkins, *Military.com*, 2019-11-06]

The top Marine Corps general is officially putting an end the long-standing tradition of toughing out the rain without an umbrella, which has become a point of pride for the amphibious service.

"Umbrellas are good to go," Gen. David Berger told reporters at the Pentagon—at least when Marines are wearing their service or dress uniforms.

Male Marines have for decades been some of the only service members barred from using umbrellas when in uniform.

The policy made headlines in 2013 when President Barack Obama was giving a speech in the rain outside the White House. Marines standing next to Obama and the Turkish president held umbrellas for the two men while they stood in the rain.

[USERRA has played a significant role supporting an all-volunteer force for 25 years](#) [Jonathan VanderPlas, *Military Times*, 2019-11-04] [OPINION]

This year, we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA), a fundamental support to our all-volunteer force.

With roots dating back to World War II, USERRA became law on Oct. 13, 1994, and has helped to build a more robust reserve component, enabling the world's strongest military to be economically efficient and deeply woven into the fabric of American community life. USERRA strengthened and formalized economic protections that enable all service members' careers to progress, without pause, while serving our nation.

Over the decades, as our nation's military strategy evolved, American sentiment has increasingly recognized that employment protections allow service members to serve our nation and succeed in civilian careers.

SEE ALSO:

[Feds allege Walmart violated reservist's employment rights](#) [*Military Times*, 2019-11-01]

MISCONDUCT

[Esper: 'Robust' conversation with Trump about proposed pardons for SEAL, two soldiers](#) [Meghann Myers, *Military Times*, 2019-11-06]

Defense Secretary Mark Esper has talked to President Donald Trump about the commander in chief's plan to potentially pardon two soldiers and a sailor, an action [CNN reported](#) Wednesday is intended to serve as a Veterans Day gesture.

Navy Times reported Monday that Trump discussed [restoring SEAL Edward "Eddie" Gallagher's pay grade](#) to chief petty officer, a week after a demotion to petty officer first class was allowed to stand.

The president also has mulled pardoning Army [1st Lt. Clint Lorance](#) and dropping the case against [Maj. Mathew Golsteyn](#), Navy Times indicated.

"I'm not going to comment on that," Esper told reporters at the Pentagon on Wednesday. "As you know, I'm in the chain of command and I'm very conscious of my remarks. But I do have full confidence in the military justice system and we'll let things play out as they play out."

Esper added that he met with Trump on Tuesday and had a "robust" conversation about the proposed pardons.

SEE ALSO:

[Clint Lorance's lawyers implore Pentagon to not label their client a 'bad apple' in talks with President Trump](#) [*Army Times*, 2019-11-06]

Spurred by church shooting, Air Force replaces outdated '90s-era crime reporting system [Stephen Losey, *Air Force Times*, 2019-11-05]

The Air Force has launched a new, up-to-date computer system that will allow it to [report criminal data](#), replacing an older system that dates back to the 1990s.

The new \$5.7 million Air Force Justice Information System was rolled out in phases, and went live for all [security forces units](#), including those in the Reserve and National Guard, Oct. 31, said project leader Lt. Col. Sandra Thompson in a release from the [Air Force Installation and Mission Support Center](#). The first case was uploaded to the system, which was developed in 10 months, at the end of September.

The Air Force in 2017 began looking for a system to replace its '90s-era Security Forces Information System, and conducted a cost-benefit analysis that year.

But the Nov. 5, 2017, shooting at the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas—in which a former airmen killed 26 people and wounded 22 more—prompted the Air Force to accelerate its procurement of the new system, Air Force spokesman Robert Leese said in an email Monday.

In 2018, a scathing Pentagon investigation found the Air Force could have prevented the shooter, Devin Kelley, from buying the weapon used in the massacre if investigators had followed proper protocol and submitted his fingerprints and information on his assault conviction to the FBI.

Trump to Restore SEAL Gallagher's Rank, Dismiss Soldiers' War Crimes Charges: Report [Gina Harkins, *Military.com*, 2019-11-04]

President Donald Trump will intervene in the cases against three troops who were accused of war crimes by dismissing charges against two soldiers and restoring the rank of a Navy SEAL, Fox News reported Monday.

Trump is expected to speak to Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy about Army 1st Lt. Clint Lorange and Maj. Matt Golsteyn, [Fox News reported](#).

Lorange, a former platoon commander, is [serving a 19-year sentence](#) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, after he was convicted of murdering two men in Afghanistan and attempting to kill a third. Golsteyn is facing a court-martial after admitting to [killing a suspected bomb maker](#) in Afghanistan in 2010. The men were unarmed at the times of their deaths.

The president is also expected to restore Navy SEAL Eddie Gallagher's rank to chief petty officer, according to Fox. That would reverse a decision made by the Navy's top officer last week that would see Gallagher retiring at the E-6 paygrade.

SEE ALSO:

[Here are the two Army war crimes cases Trump is reportedly going to 'take action' on](#) [Army Times, 2019-11-04]

[Report: Trump makes SEAL Gallagher a chief again](#) [Navy Times, 2019-11-04]

Video shows July mass arrest of Marines accused of human smuggling at Camp Pendleton [Andrew Dyer, *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, 2019-11-06]

The July mass arrest of 15 Camp Pendleton Marines in front of their 800-person battalion may have violated their rights and threatens to upend the case, attorneys for two of the accused told the Union-Tribune.

In total, 13 Marines were charged with human smuggling and conspiracy, and eight more were taken away for questioning. Those eight, who were said at the time to be suspects in an unspecified drug activity, were escorted off but not charged.

The arrests became national news.

The Marine Corps filmed the whole thing.

That video and the public way the arrests were handled are why two attorneys, each representing one of the Marines, are publicly criticizing the arrests. One of the attorneys filed a defense motion Friday saying the public arrests tainted the jury pool in any potential trial.

RACISM

[Black man who led neo-Nazi group dies amid bid to destroy it](#) [Michael Kunzelman, *The Associated Press*, 2019-11-04]

A black activist who took control of one of the nation's largest neo-Nazi groups — and vowed to dismantle it — has died amid a legal fight over who would lead the group.

James Stern died Oct. 11 after getting hospice care for cancer, according to one of his attorneys, Bob Ross, and a friend, Arne Edward List. Stern, 55, died at home in Moreno Valley, California, List said.

*Earlier this year, Stern told *The Associated Press* and other news outlets that he persuaded the National Socialist Movement's former leader, Jeff Schoep, to give him control of the group. Schoep says Stern essentially tricked him into the transfer.*

Michigan corporate records show Stern replaced Schoep in January. However, Stern sued several group members in March after Schoep signed corporate records naming a different president.

[FBI arrests self-proclaimed white supremacist in alleged plot to blow up historic synagogue](#) [Derek Hawkins, *The Washington Post*, 2019-11-04]

The FBI arrested a self-proclaimed white supremacist who allegedly planned to blow up a historic Colorado synagogue and poison congregants as part of a "racial holy war," federal officials said Monday. Investigators called the alleged plot a hate crime and an act of domestic terrorism.

Richard Holzer, 27, was arrested Friday night after picking up what he thought was a bundle of pipe bombs and dynamite from undercover agents, according to an affidavit filed in federal court in Denver. He was wearing a Nazi armband during the meeting and carrying a copy of "Mein Kampf," FBI Special Agent John W. Smith wrote in the filing.

Investigators said Holzer wanted to blow up the Temple Emanuel synagogue in Pueblo, Colo. The structure is the state's second-oldest synagogue and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

SEE ALSO:

[Colorado white supremacist charged with plotting to detonate explosives at synagogue](#) [Reuters, 2019-11-04]

['It's okay to be white' signs placed on East Tennessee State University's campus](#) [Jason Gonzales, *USA TODAY*, 2019-11-05]

"It's okay to be white" flyers were placed [throughout East Tennessee State University's campus](#), including to cover a memorial for the school's first African-American students.

ETSU President [Brian Noland moved quickly on Saturday](#) to denounce the flyers and called it an attack on the campus and its values. Monday, Noland said in a statement that campus staff acted quickly to remove the flyers.

The school is one of several throughout the nation where groups have recently emailed or posted flyers with the slogan, which is used among racist groups. Incidents were reported in [California](#), [Connecticut](#) and [Oklahoma](#).

RELIGION

[Trump's 'conscience' rule for healthcare workers struck down by U.S. judge](#) [Jonathan Stempel, *Reuters*, 2019-11-06]

A federal judge on Wednesday voided a White House-backed rule making it easier for doctors, nurses and other healthcare providers to avoid performing abortions and other medical services on religious or moral grounds.

U.S. District Judge Paul Engelmayer in Manhattan said the “conscience” rule was unconstitutionally coercive because it would let the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) withhold billions of dollars of funding from hospitals, clinics, universities and other healthcare providers that did not comply.

HHS countered that the rule would help enforce conscience protection laws that have been on the books for decades.

[US growth of Islam creates need for religious scholars](#) [Jeff Karoub and Noreen Nasir, *The Associated Press*, 2019-11-04]

Imam Mohammad Qazwini’s deep understanding of Islam and his formal training at a seminary in the holy city of Qom, Iran, draws students to this suburban Detroit classroom just off the large prayer room of a mosque.

But there’s another attraction. The Quran, Islam’s holy book, is written in classical Arabic, but many of the students aren’t well-versed in the language. Qazwini navigates its intricacies effortlessly — in the everyday English they use, opening a door for many of the students.

An increasing number of U.S. Muslims want guidance from religious instructors who they can understand linguistically and culturally.

For mosques around the country, the need to produce U.S.-trained religious leaders is increasing.

SEXUAL ASSAULT/HARASSMENT

[VA sexual assault cases raise concerns among a pair of GOP lawmakers](#) [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 2019-11-06]

A pair of Republican senators are questioning whether Veterans Affairs officials are doing enough to prevent and punish sexual assault at department locations in light of [several high-profile “disturbing” charges](#) against VA employees.

In a letter released Tuesday, the two women—[Sens. Joni Ernst of Iowa](#) and Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia—asked VA Secretary Robert Wilkie to outline the number of [sexual assault convictions](#) against

department workers in recent years, as well as detail oversight policies for contractors and response procedures for reports of such assaults.

Women make up about 10 percent of the nation's veterans population, 17 percent of current military personnel and 30 percent of military service academy students. The number of women using VA health services has more than tripled over the last two decades.

SUICIDE

[USAF: Leaders Should Share their Own Stories to Keep Resiliency Push Going](#) [Brian Everstine, *Air Force Magazine*, 2019-11-05]

The Air Force is encouraging senior leaders to be forthcoming with their own personal stories to connect with airmen and ensure the discussion continues, following the recent stand-down implemented to focus on mental health amid a dramatic increase in suicides.

"Us, as leaders, need to open up and show our brokenness," said CMSgt. Terrence Greene, the command chief master sergeant for Air Mobility Command, in a recent interview. "We're not perfect, we're going through challenges in our lives."

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David Goldfein in late July ordered a [one-day "resilience tactical pause"](#) to address the issue of suicide across the Air Force, which he said was an "adversary that is killing more of our airmen than any enemy on the planet."

As wings across the service paused operations for a day to discuss suicide, Goldfein said some were more effective than others. [In a recent interview](#) with *Air Force Magazine*, he said the most effective discussions stemmed from commanders being proactive and opening up about their personal stories.

VETERANS

[Companies that Recruit Veterans Often Fail to Hire Them, Data Shows](#) [Amy Bushatz, *Military.com*, 2019-11-06]

The buzz companies make around hiring veterans often doesn't result in actual jobs, according to a [study released Tuesday by LinkedIn](#).

Transitioning veterans received 26% more recruiter messages via LinkedIn than their civilian counterparts, the study found. But while interest in veterans from the recruiters was high, 38 of the top 50 industries actually employ veterans at a lower rate than nonveterans. And when they did make it through the door, veterans were 70% more likely than nonveterans to walk into a new gig that was a step down, the report said.

The gap between recruitment and hiring rates and the rate of veteran underemployment can likely be traced back to an issue that has long plagued the military community -- the military-civilian divide, said Sarah Roberts, who heads military and veteran programs for LinkedIn.

But it's not just civilian companies that don't understand veterans and end up shuffling them into roles don't match their experience, she said. Veterans also don't understand the breadth of possibilities that they could seek from civilian companies.

SEE ALSO:

[7 tips for veterans to land a federal job](#) [*Military Times*, 2019-11-06]

[Senior Lawmaker Promises to Make Veteran Mental Health Care a Priority](#) [Chiara Vercellone, *Military.com*, 2019-11-07]

A bill to improve veterans' access to mental health care and reduce veteran suicide rates will get a committee vote next year if, as expected, Sen. Jerry Moran becomes chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, Moran and co-sponsor Sen. Jon Tester said Wednesday.

Committee Chairman Sen. Johnny Isakson of Georgia is retiring at the end of this year, and Moran, of Kansas, is the Republican next in seniority. Speaking at a Washington Post panel discussion, Moran said veterans' mental health care and suicide prevention will be a priority of the committee when he becomes chairman and he will work "to see that legislation occurs."

The measure was introduced in March to improve health care provided by the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) to veterans across the country.

The bill also would allow veterans to be treated with innovative suicide prevention initiatives like animal therapy, yoga, meditation and acupuncture. Tester said in parts of Montana, private groups are already taking veterans out on fly-fishing trips, which have helped many of them manage mental health issues.

Moran said the bill would be an answer to the lack of mental health care professionals available, especially for veterans.

SEE ALSO:

[Departing vets committee chairman hopes partisan divisions won't overwhelm VA policy work](#) [*Military Times*, 2019-11-07]

[Veterans in Connecticut prison getting help from horses](#) [*Military Times*, 2019-11-07]

[It's time for Congress to establish a national mental health crisis number](#) [*The Hill*, 2019-11-06]

[OPINION]

[House lawmakers plan to push ahead on veterans mental health expansion plan. If they can get past their squabbles.](#) [*Military Times*, 2019-11-05]

[Suicide Has Been Deadlier Than Combat for the Military](#) [*The New York Times*, 2019-11-01] [OPINION]

[In Congress, Veteran Suicide Prevention Is a Bipartisan Topic. Here's the Plan](#) [*Military.com*, 2019-10-31]

[VA Taking Note of 'Alarming' Burn Pit Trends in WWP Survey](#) [Richard Sisk, *Military.com*, 2019-11-05]

A disturbing trend related to exposure to burn pits while deployed, recently [detailed in a Wounded Warrior Project survey](#), has been noted by the Department of Veterans Affairs. But more research is needed before any changes to presumptive illnesses and benefits can be considered, according to a top VA official.

The VA currently lacks the scientific evidence to establish a causal relationship between exposure to burn pits and a variety of illnesses, but the WWP survey released last week will be taken into account, said Dr. Carolyn Clancy, the VA's deputy under secretary for Discovery, Education and Affiliate Networks.

The 10th annual survey of ill, injured and wounded veterans registered with WWP for the first time included questions on exposure to environmental hazards such as chemical warfare agents, ionizing radiation, burn pits and other potentially toxic substances during their military service.

Of the more than 35,900 respondents, about 70% said "they were definitely exposed in their time of service" to burn pits and other sources of toxins, said Dr. Melanie Mousseau, WWP's director of metrics, who called the findings "alarming."

[Veterans more likely to be targeted by sophisticated financial scams](#) [Niko Boskovic, *Military Times*, 2019-11-06]

Veterans are twice as likely to unknowingly participate in a scam as the general population, Carroll Harris, a U.S. Postal Inspection Service senior law enforcement official, said at [the Senate Committee on Aging] hearing.

According to a 2017 AARP survey, 16 percent of U.S. veterans have lost money to fraudsters, while 78 percent have been [targeted by scams](#) specifically crafted to exploit their service history.

Harris said there is an array of services available for veterans who are victims of scams. In 2017, AARP and the Postal Inspection Service launched Operation Protect Veterans to reach out to veterans and warn them of the sophisticated schemes and scams. Wary veterans can call veteran service organizations, the Senate Special Committee on Aging, or visit the Postal Inspection Service's website, as well as the federal government's [MilitaryConsumer.gov](#) website.

SEE ALSO:

[VA Plans to Resolve all 'Legacy Appeals' by the End of 2022](#) [*Military.com*, 2019-11-06]

[Here's a New, Fast Way for Veterans to See Their Health Records](#) [*Military.com*, 2019-11-06]

[New Study Supports Using Shot to Treat PTSD](#) [*USNI News*, 2019-11-06]

[In Five Years, the VA Has Given Out 200,000 Doses of Anti-Overdose Drug](#) [*Military.com*, 2019-11-05]

[Thieves among honor: counterfeit veterans](#) [*Military Times*, 2019-11-05]

['Horse whisperer' helps veterans with PTSD on Military Channel](#) [*Military Times*, 2019-11-04]