

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.

Christianity is declining at a rapid pace, but Americans still hold positive views about religion's role in society [Sarah Pulliam Bailey, *The Washington Post*, 2019-11-15]

- Christianity has been [rapidly declining](#) in the United States while the number of Americans who are religiously unaffiliated is growing. [Gallup polls](#) have found a massive, three-decade fall in confidence in “organized religion” from as high as 66 percent in the mid-1980s to 36 percent in 2019. Pope Francis’s image [has declined](#) in [multiple surveys](#) in the wake of new revelations about sex abuse scandals.
- But [Pew’s survey](#), published Friday, finds that Americans hold more-positive views of religion’s role overall and concerns about it declining. Fifty-five percent say churches and religious organizations do more good than harm in society (compared with 20 percent of people who think it does more harm than good). Similar majorities say religious organizations strengthen morality in society (53 percent), and 50 percent say they bring people together.
- And among the 78 percent who think religion is losing influence in American life, 42 percent say that’s a bad thing, compared with 17 percent who say that’s a good thing (19 percent say it doesn’t make a difference). [Christianity is declining at a rapid pace, but Americans still hold positive views about religion's role in society](#)

Hate-Crime Violence Hits 16-Year High, F.B.I. Reports [Adeel Hassan, *The New York Times*, 2019-11-12]

- Personal attacks motivated by bias or prejudice reached a 16-year high in 2018, the F.B.I. said Tuesday, with a significant upswing in violence against Latinos outpacing a drop in assaults targeting Muslims and Arab-Americans.
- Over all, the number of hate crimes of all kinds reported in the United States remained fairly flat last year after a three-year increase, [according to an annual F.B.I. report](#). But while crimes against property were down, physical assaults against people were up, accounting for 61 percent of the 7,120 incidents classified as hate crimes by law enforcement officials nationwide.
- The F.B.I. defines [a hate crime](#) as a “criminal offense against a person or property, motivated in whole or in part by an offender’s bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity.” Victims of hate crimes can include institutions, religious organizations, and government entities as well as individuals.

[Hate-Crime Violence Hits 16-Year High, F.B.I. Reports](#)

Women veterans measure at center of congressional controversy advances [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 2019-11-13]

- In a post-Veterans Day legislative blitz, House lawmakers passed nine veterans policy measures on Tuesday, including a sweeping bill [expanding women veterans support services](#) that had been at the heart of a [committee controversy](#) last month.
- That bill, the Deborah Sampson Act, passed with an overwhelming 399-11 vote and would require more oversight of women’s health care within the Department of Veterans Affairs, establish a new Office of Women’s Health in the agency, and extend coverage of healthcare for newborn children of veterans from seven to 14 days.
- The legislation—named for Revolutionary War veteran Deborah Sampson Gannett—has been stalled on Capitol Hill for the last few years, but supporters are hopeful the Senate will take up the latest version before the end of the year. Several controversial provisions, like [changing the VA motto](#) to eliminate male-specific language, are not in the draft passed this week.

[Women veterans measure at center of congressional controversy advances](#)

CULTURE

[‘1, 2, 3, 4, Marine Corps’: Watch the new cadence the Corps created for its 244th birthday](#) [Philip Athey, *Marine Corps Times*, 2019-11-10]

To mark its birthday, [the Marine Corps has created its first ever birthday running cadence](#), honoring Marine history and celebrating 244 years of service by Marines past and present.

The new cadence has three distinct parts: The first covers the founding of the Corps and the esprit de corps derived from the service’s fighting record.

After covering the fighting history, the cadence shifts into one about what it takes to become a Marine.

The final part of the cadence goes into the annual ball celebration and why the Marine Corps celebrates its history like no other branch.

SEE ALSO:

[Presidential Message on the 244th Birthday of the United States Marine Corps](#) [Whitehouse.gov, 2019-11-10]

[Video: Happy 244th birthday, United States Marine Corps](#) [Military Times, 2019-11-10]

[Army drops new recruiting ad over Veterans Day weekend](#) [Kyle Rempfer, *Army Times*, 2019-11-12]

The Army’s recruiting arm released its new [advertising campaign](#) Saturday.

The campaign is called “What’s Your Warrior?” and is courtesy of the service’s [Chicago-based marketing team](#) that was stood up this fall.

The new commercial depicts U.S. soldiers from five career paths: a lab tech, a signals troop, an aviator, a cyber operator and a sniper-qualified soldier.

The homepage also has a blurb for the new campaign stating: “Your skills can make an impact. Your fight can transform our world. Your will can turn a global challenge into your daily mission. Join forces with us and you can take on anything.”

That message is catered to [Generation Z recruits](#), or those born after 1996. Army leadership has repeatedly said that these young people are looking for a larger mission in life, citing data the service has gathered.

[The blinding of a WWII vet opened America’s eyes to the evil of Jim Crow](#) [Chris Lamb, *Navy Times*, 2019-11-09]

On the evening of Feb. 12, 1946, Isaac Woodard, a 26-year-old Black Army veteran, boarded a bus in Augusta, Georgia. Earlier that day, he’d been honorably discharged, and he was heading to Winnsboro, South Carolina to reunite with his wife.

The bus driver made a stop en route. When Woodard asked if he had time to use the bathroom, the driver cursed loudly at him. Woodard would [later admit in a deposition](#) that he cursed back.

Neither man said anything until the bus stopped in Batesburg, South Carolina. There, the driver told the local police about Woodard’s impudence. Woodard was ordered off the bus. When Woodard tried to give his version of events, a police officer struck him with a night stick. Woodard was escorted to the jail, where, [he later testified](#), he was repeatedly beaten by the police chief, Linwood Shull. Woodard said that Shull pounded him in his eyes with the end of the night stick until he blacked out (charges Shull would deny).

Once Woodard regained consciousness, he couldn’t see.

Woodard was [charged with disorderly conduct](#), with the police claiming he'd been intoxicated. Witnesses, however, said he hadn't been drinking. After paying a fine, Woodard was driven to a veterans' hospital in Columbia, where doctors told him he would be permanently blind.

The NAACP took on Woodard's cause. [A benefit concert for Woodward](#) in New York City included such entertainers as Orson Welles, Woody Guthrie, Cab Calloway, Billie Holiday and Milton Berle. Woodard's fight for justice would reach the Oval Office, with its shadow even touching the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

US Admiral: What Veterans Day is all about [Adm. Mike Gilday, CNN, 2019-11-09] **[OPINION]**

Across the nation this Veterans Day, we honor the service, sacrifice and commitment of those men and women who have worn the cloth of this great nation. If you believe as I do that there is a desire in every human heart to live in freedom, then this day is a special day.

For 244 years, American heroes have built a Navy that supports and defends the nation we are today -- a country that has been blessed with unprecedented freedom, security and prosperity. While our ships, submarines and aircraft are made of steel, it is the sailors who give our Navy its lifeblood.

To America's veterans, you have our utmost respect and gratitude for your sacrifice. We who serve in the Navy today pledge to carry on your legacy of service far into the future.

SEE ALSO:

[‘Remember the lost ones’: The powerful song in this new music video was written by a Marine vet trying to explain his experience in Iraq](#) [Marine Corps Times, 2019-11-11]

[Video: A salute to veterans - 2019](#) [Military Times, 2019-11-10]

[Interview: Jan C. Scruggs, president of Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund](#) [Military Times, 2019-11-07]

DISCRIMINATION

The Latest Backlog at the VA: Whistleblower Complaints [Dorothy Mills-Gregg, Military.com, 2019-11-14]

Members of Congress expressed concern and curiosity about the reason for a “significant” backlog in resolving the Department of Veterans Affairs’ whistleblower complaints.

The VA Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection has 572 investigative cases that are more than 120 days old, with “many” that have been open for one or two years, Assistant Secretary Dr. Tamara Bonzanto testified in a House Appropriations subcommittee hearing Thursday.

Meanwhile, lawmakers also discussed some of the issues raised in an OIG report released in October that found the office had not adequately protected whistleblowers’ identities or saved them from retaliation.

Wisconsin Guard whistleblower says he’s being discharged [Todd Richmond, The Associated Press, 2019-11-08]

A Wisconsin National Guard sergeant said Friday that his superiors have decided to discharge him from the service and deny him retirement benefits in retaliation for complaining about sexual misconduct in his unit.

Wisconsin Air National Guard Master Sgt. Jay Ellis’ complaints about sexual assault and sexual harassment within the 115th Fighter Wing last year sparked two federal investigations.

Ellis filed [a separate complaint](#) this past May with the Wisconsin National Guard's inspector general's office alleging that Guard officials transferred him out of his unit in January and had launched an in-depth review of his medical history to set up a medical discharge and deny him retirement benefits.

DIVERSITY

[Capturing the life of women in the military is this photographer's passion](#) [Diana Stancy Correll, *Military Times*, 2019-11-08]

Photojournalist Lynsey Addario has covered conflict all over the world for more than 20 years, including in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Africa.

But her most recent project for *National Geographic*'s November issue titled "[Women: A Century of Change](#)" was the first time women in the military—both in the U.S. and elsewhere—took the spotlight in her storytelling.

"It was unique in that my focus was on covering women," Addario told the *Military Times* about the project. "So in this situation, I was looking specifically for women in different situations," Addario added that she aimed to cover the spectrum of women in uniform, from those still in training to experienced commanders who've served in combat for decades.

Her piece, titled "[On today's battlefields, more women than ever are in the fight,](#)" captures the contributions of women serving in militaries all over the world, and how they are increasingly tackling active roles.

[Coast Guard Reshaping Body Fat Measurement Standard in Pilot Study](#) [Ben Werner, *USNI News*, 2019-11-08]

The Coast Guard, in an effort to take the stress out of gauging the physical fitness of its members, started a year-long effort revamping the way it measures body fat composition with the goal of encouraging healthy lifestyles and improving its female retention rates.

The pilot program was started because of a concern the Coast Guard's method of measuring body fat composition was contributing a lower female retention rates when compared to the number of men opting to remain in the Coast Guard, Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz said last month during an event co-hosted by the U.S. Naval Institute and the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Earlier this year, Rand Corp. released a study detailing reasons why women are leaving the Coast Guard, Schultz said. The study, [Why Do Women Leave the Coast Guard, and What Can Be Done to Encourage Them to Stay?](#) detailed several factors causing women to leave the service and included some suggestions to improve retention.

The report specifically cited weight standards as a concern among female members of the Coast Guard.

[Marine Commandant Responds to Backlash over Lack of Women in Birthday Video](#) [Gina Harkins, *Military.com*, 2019-11-07]

Marine Corps leaders were hit with criticism this week after releasing a new eight-minute video message in honor of the service's 244th birthday that included just six seconds of footage featuring women.

The Marine Corps released its 2019 birthday message last week. It references some of the Corps' most iconic battles and previews where the service is headed next.

[Emma Shinn, a judge advocate and prior-enlisted Marine] wrote about her disappointment with the video on Facebook this weekend. The post, which points out that just 1.26% of the eight-minute video featured female Marines, has generated hundreds of reactions. Newsweek [reported about the criticism](#) of the video on Monday.

A former sergeant told Task & Purpose, which [created a new version of the birthday video](#) to include more clips featuring women, that the Marine Corps still struggles with a culture of “disdain and hatred” toward female Marines.

[Marine Corps Training Chief Says He’s Open to Ending Gender-Segregated Boot Camp](#) [Gina Harkins, *Military.com*, 2019-11-14]

The Marine Corps could train as many as eight [co-ed companies at boot camp](#) each year, and the general overseeing the effort is hitting back against those complaining that the move is lowering training standards.

The Marine Corps is currently training its second and third co-ed companies at its East Coast recruit depot in Parris Island, South Carolina, where men and women have historically been separated.

*Commandant Gen. David Berger told *Military.com* this summer that Marines should expect more co-ed recruit training companies to move through Parris Island. And while Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego remains an all-male facility, Berger said he’d “look at what makes sense” on both coasts.*

Each of the co-ed companies is made up of six platoons -- one of which is all-female, and the other five all-male. That’s the same model used by 3rd Recruit Training Battalion’s India Company, the first-ever co-ed company to graduate from Parris Island earlier this year.

[The Marines Want an Academic Study on the Cost, Impacts of Co-Ed Boot Camp](#) [Gina Harkins, *Military.com*, 2019-11-12]

As more men and women train together at Marine Corps boot camp, the service is looking for a university that can complete an in-depth study of co-ed recruit training.

The Marine Corps has been facing pressure from some in Congress to further integrate recruit training.

In June, Rep. Jackie Speier, a California Democrat and chair of the House Armed Services military personnel subcommittee, proposed an amendment that would prohibit separating men and women at the Marine Corps recruit depots.

This month, the Marine Corps began training its second and third co-ed companies at Parris Island. The first-ever co-ed Marine Corps recruit training company graduated at Parris Island in March.

Men and women at Parris Island do routinely train together, but not as part of the same company. Women are typically only assigned to 4th Recruit Training Battalion, which only trains female recruits.

[Submarine Community Can’t Meet Demand From Female Sailors](#) [Ben Werner, *USNI News*, 2019-11-11]

The Navy has more women seeking to serve on submarines that it has room for, according to both the Atlantic and Pacific submarine force master chiefs.

*Currently, the Navy has 84 female officers and 219 enlisted female sailors serving on submarine crews. Female officers serve on 19 submarine crews, and female enlisted sailors are part of eight submarine crews. Lt. Cmdr. Adam Cole, a Navy personnel spokesman told *USNI News*.*

A year and a half ago, [USNI News reported](#) the Navy had 18 submarine crews with female officers, and female enlisted sailors were part of four crews. The Navy's previously stated goal is to have female officers on 21 submarine crews and female enlisted sailors on 14 submarine crews by 2024.

In July, the Navy switched to a constant process of accepting applications from female sailors interested in serving on submarines. Previously, the Navy evaluated conversions to submarine service only a few times per year, and on a boat-by-boat basis, according to Cole. Vice Adm. John Nowell, the commander of naval personnel, announced the policy change in a [July NAVADMIN](#).

The response was high-quality female sailors, the top performers from around the Navy, are seeking to switch to serving on submarines, [Master Chief Kevin Scarff, the force master chief for the submarine force, U.S. Pacific Fleet] said. The Navy rescinded its males-only on submarines policy in 2010.

Women veterans measure at center of congressional controversy advances [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 2019-11-13]

In a post-Veterans Day legislative blitz, House lawmakers passed nine veterans policy measures on Tuesday, including a sweeping bill [expanding women veterans support services](#) that had been at the heart of [a committee controversy last month](#).

That bill, the Deborah Sampson Act, passed with an overwhelming 399-11 vote and would require more oversight of women's health care within the Department of Veterans Affairs, establish a new Office of Women's Health in the agency, and extend coverage of healthcare for newborn children of veterans from seven to 14 days.

The legislation—named for Revolutionary War veteran Deborah Sampson Gannett—has been stalled on Capitol Hill for the last few years, but supporters are hopeful the Senate will take up the latest version before the end of the year. Several controversial provisions, like [changing the VA motto](#) to eliminate male-specific language, are not in the draft passed this week.

MISCELLANEOUS

Black student loan borrowers are defaulting at nearly twice the rate of Whites: NY Fed [Jonnelle Marte, *Reuters*, 2019-11-13]

Student loan borrowers from mostly Black neighborhoods are almost twice as likely to default on their debt as borrowers from neighborhoods that are mostly White, according to research released Wednesday by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

Fed researchers found that people in Black-majority neighborhoods were slightly more likely to borrow for college, with 23% of residents carrying student loans, compared to 17% of people in Hispanic-majority neighborhoods and 14% in White-majority zip codes.

Some 17.7% of borrowers in majority-Black neighborhoods defaulted on their student loans, a proportion roughly twice as high as the 9% of borrowers from mostly White neighborhoods who defaulted on loans.

The average student loan balance in Black-majority areas was more than \$37,000 at the end of September, about equal to the average income of \$38,000 reported on tax returns in those areas in 2016, the most recent data available. That suggests those borrowers may have a high debt-to-income ratio, a measure that lenders often look at when determining credit worthiness.

[Gen. Maryanne Miller's message to new airmen: It's all about character](#) [Diana Stancy Correll, *Air Force Times*, 2019-11-13]

Air Force Gen. Maryanne Miller, the only female four-star officer in the U.S. military, has a word of advice for airmen: character counts.

"I tell our young airmen, you know, you really need to be good at what you do, and you really need to be a good person," Miller said in an interview that aired Friday on [NBC's TODAY Show](#). "I spend a lot of time on their heart. You can be a technical expert all day, but when that goes away ... who are you? It's what you have inside."

Miller, who took charge of Air Mobility Command in September 2018, attributed her focus on connecting as the reason she remains down to earth as she's progressed in her career.

When asked what it's like to be the highest ranking female officer in the U.S. military, Miller said she hopes to serve as a model to other young women.

[Lawmakers under pressure to pass benefits fix for military families](#) [Naomi Jagoda, *The Hill*, 2019-11-14]

Lawmakers and stakeholder groups are pushing for legislation to be enacted this year that would help families of deceased military members have more money in survivor benefits.

Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle are pushing to end a requirement that reduces the amount of money military families receive in survivor benefits. They're also pushing to get legislation enacted that would fix a provision of President Trump's 2017 tax law that inadvertently raised taxes on military survivor benefits received by children.

Both changes have overwhelming bipartisan support and have been included in separate bills that have passed the House. But it remains to be seen if they get enacted this year.

"We're very hopeful," said Candace Wheeler, senior adviser for policy and legislation at the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors. "We believe it is the intent of Congress to do both, and it's just a matter of time."

[Meet the Retired Generals Working to End Childhood Obesity for a Fitter Force](#) [Hope Hodge Seck, *Military.com*, 2019-11-13]

For retired Rear Adm. Bob Besal, advocacy started small.

He'd heard from friends who were still in the Navy and holding senior positions in the service's recruiting command that qualified recruits were getting harder to come by. Those who had a clean criminal record and met basic height, weight and educational standards were a smaller portion of the recruitable population, and the Navy was forced to compete hard with civilian job fields to woo them.

In Besal's home state of South Carolina, he was particularly worried about the food kids get in schools. In a state with a lot of low-income students, school lunches were often high on sodium and low on fresh fruits and veggies. Overall, South Carolina ranked 7th among the 50 states for the percentage of 18-24 year olds who were overweight and obese from 2006 to 2008, and that percentage rose significantly over the past decade.

In 2010, he joined more than 120 retired general and flag officers in endorsing a damning report by the Washington, D.C.-based organization Mission: Readiness that declared the child obesity epidemic a

national security issue. It urged the removal of junk food from American schools and increases in school lunch funding to allow for healthier food.

Mold, rotting wood, water leaks: 10 military families sue their privatized landlord at Fort Meade [Karen Jowers, *Military Times*, 2019-11-13]

Fort Meade military families are suing their privatized housing landlord in federal court, claiming the company failed to address their problems with [mold](#), leaks and other issues, leaving them stuck in houses with puddling water, rotting wood, rampant mold and other unsafe and unhealthy conditions.

The lawsuit was filed in federal court in Maryland Tuesday against Corvias Management-Army, LLC, and Meade Communities, LLC on behalf of 10 families who live or have lived at Fort Meade. Meade Communities is part of Corvias, which owns about 24,000 homes at seven Army bases and six Air Force bases.

The lawsuit also alleges Corvias violated the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act. Because the company failed to fix the problems, some of the [families](#) felt they had no choice but to move. In effect, that constituted “constructive eviction,” the lawsuit alleges. Others felt they were stuck because they couldn’t afford to move. The families are Navy, Army, Air Force and Coast Guard.

The 92-page lawsuit describes water puddling indoors, moldy walls and wet carpet with mold underneath, rotting floor and beams, [numerous illnesses and symptoms](#), and mold-induced [financial problems](#). Families asked for repairs that were allegedly slow in coming, or never. Families have been displaced, and in some cases the homes they were moved to were also contaminated with mold. Families have spent money out of pocket for mold testing, to replace personal belongings contaminated by mold, and for some moving expenses.

POW/MIA flag to fly at federal sites year round [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 2019-11-08]

Prominent federal buildings and national war memorials will now fly the [iconic POW/MIA flag](#) alongside the American flag throughout the year thanks to legislation signed into law Thursday.

The proposal, passed without objection in the House last month and the Senate earlier this year, is designed to help highlight the continued sacrifice of military families [whose loved ones are still unaccounted for overseas](#), estimated at about 82,000 individuals. President Donald Trump finalized the measure on Thursday night.

Veterans advocates praised the move as an important message to the entire country.

The flag—created in 1972 for the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War—has been flown at numerous federal properties over the years, but typically only on special occasions and holidays.

Problems with Military Housing Began Decades Ago, Manager Says [Richard Sisk, *Military.com*, 2019-11-14]

The head of a company named in a lawsuit charging mold infestation and other substandard conditions in on-base housing at Fort Meade, Maryland, last week acknowledged a history of neglect by private firms and the Defense Department in managing military housing and pledged \$325 million for fixups.

The neglect dated back to the failed implementation of a 1996 plan called the Military House Privatization Initiative (MHPI), said Picerne, whose firm manages 26,000 homes at 13 Army and Air Force installations, including Fort Meade.

Picerne said Corvias was assembling the \$325 million from investors to improve and renovate existing military housing it managed.

The 10 military families who are plaintiffs in the suit filed Tuesday in U.S. District Court in Maryland alleged that Corvias' failure to address maintenance requests resulted in mold and other substandard conditions that caused them economic harm and made them sick.

MISCONDUCT

[Airman accused of White nationalist ties loses stripe after investigation—but still in the Air Force](#) [Stephen Losey, *Air Force Times*, 2019-11-12]

An airman at Schriever Air Force Base in Colorado Springs, Colorado, has been reduced in rank from master sergeant to technical sergeant after an investigation into his alleged ties to a [White nationalist group](#).

But Tech. Sgt. Cory Reeves remains in the Air Force as of now, according to the Air Force. It remains unclear whether the Air Force will move to separate him.

Reeves, who was then a master sergeant at the 50th Space Wing at Schriever, was [identified as a member and organizer of Identity Evropa](#) by the group Colorado Springs Anti-Fascists in an online post in April. The anti-fascist group also alleged Reeves has distributed [White supremacist propaganda](#) in Colorado several times.

Concerns about the influence and reach of White supremacist and neo-Nazi organizations in the military have been growing in recent years. A Military Times poll in fall 2018 found about 22 percent of service members said they saw signs of White nationalism or racist ideology in the ranks, about the same as the previous year's poll. But an increasing percentage of non-White service members reported signs of White nationalism or racism — up from 42 percent in 2017 to more than half the following year.

[Facebook reports it took action against tens of millions of posts for breaking rules on hate speech, harassment and child exploitation](#) [Tony Romm, *The Washington Post*, 2019-11-13]

Facebook took action against tens of millions of posts, photos and videos over the past six months for violating its rules that prohibit hate speech, harassment and child sexual exploitation, illustrating the vast scale of the tech giant's task in cleaning up its services from harm and abuse.

The company revealed the data about its policy enforcement to the world as part of its [latest transparency report](#), which it said reflected its still-improving efforts to use artificial intelligence to spot harmful content before users ever see it and outwit those who try to evade its censors. The report did not break down the actions by country.

During the second and third quarter of 2019, [Facebook said](#) it removed or labeled more than 54 million pieces of content it deemed violent and graphic, 18.5 million items determined to be child nudity or sexual exploitation, 11.4 million posts that broke its rules prohibiting hate speech and 5.7 million uploads that ran afoul of bullying and harassment policies.

SEE ALSO:

[Facebook says it removed millions of posts over hate speech, child exploitation violations](#) [*The Hill*, 2019-11-13]

[LGBTQ slurs, pretending a chain gun was his penis, investigation into battalion commander fired in middle of MEU deployment shows](#) [Philip Athey, *Marine Corps Times*, 2019-11-10]

An infantry battalion commander abruptly [fired in the middle of a deployment in 2018](#) had acted unprofessionally by pretending a M242 bushmaster chain gun was his penis, and for years used derogatory slurs that LGBTQ people could find offensive, a command investigation found.

Lt. Col. Marcus J. Mainz, fired in the middle of a deployment with the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit in May 2018, admitted to violating an order limiting alcohol consumption, unprofessional and immature behavior and years of derogatory slurs.

An equal opportunity complaint had been filed against Mainz, the commander of 2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, for using the word “f-ggoty,” which led to a Marine Corps investigation.

A command climate survey from before the deployment, multiple comments showed Marines complaining about the commander’s lack of professionalism and worries he would embarrass the unit and the Corps.

*Mainz retired from the Marine Corps Oct. 31, Yvonne Carlock, a spokeswoman with Marine Corps Manpower and Reserve Affairs, told *Marine Corps Times*.*

[White House and Pentagon prepare for Trump to issue pardons in war-crimes cases, officials say](#) [Dan Lamothe and Josh Dawsey, *The Washington Post*, 2019-11-14]

President Trump is expected to intervene in three military justice cases involving service members charged with war crimes any day, issuing pardons or otherwise clearing them of wrongdoing and preventing the U.S. military from bringing the same charges again, three U.S. officials said Thursday.

White House and Pentagon officials have been working out the details for days, said the officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue. The details were not all clear but are expected to involve executive clemency, in which Trump can pardon someone or shorten a prison sentence through commutation.

The actions have been anticipated by U.S. officials and advocates for the service members for weeks, and decried by some military justice experts for what they see as a subversion of the legal process. But those experts also acknowledge that, as commander in chief, Trump has broad authority in the cases to act as he sees fit.

RACISM

[Desire to join military large focus of leaked chats in infamous neo-Nazi forum](#) [Shawn Snow, Meghann Myers, and George Altman, *Military Times*, 2019-11-07]

The database for the [neo-Nazi](#) forum Iron March was dumped online by unknown activists Wednesday and includes chat logs detailing discussions by some who claim to be service members and others expressing a desire to join the U.S. military.

A Marine spokesman said the sympathies expressed in the chats run counter to the service’s core values.

“The Marine Corps is clear on this: There is no place for racial hatred or extremism in the Marine Corps. Our strength is derived from the individual excellence of every Marine regardless of background. Bigotry

and racial extremism run contrary to our core values,” Capt. Joseph Butterfield, a Marine spokesman told *Military Times* in an emailed statement.

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, 25 of which were investigation and 18 of which ended in discipline or involuntary separation.

A 2017 *Military Times* poll found that service members ranked White nationalism as a bigger national security threat than Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, and they were seeing shades of it in their fellow troops.

[The GI Bill should’ve been race neutral, politicians made sure it wasn’t](#) [Joseph Thompson, *Military Times*, 2019-11-10] [OPINION]

When President Franklin Roosevelt signed the GI Bill into law on June 22, 1944, it [laid the foundation](#) for benefits that would help generations of veterans [achieve social mobility](#).

Formally known as the [Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944](#), the bill made unprecedented commitments to the nation’s veterans. For instance, it provided federal assistance to veterans in the form of housing and unemployment benefits. But of all the benefits offered through the GI Bill, funding for higher education and job training emerged as the [most popular](#).

[More than 2 million veterans flocked](#) to college campuses throughout the country. But even as former service members entered college, not all of them accessed the bill’s benefits in the same way. That’s because White southern politicians designed the distribution of benefits under the GI Bill to [uphold their segregationist beliefs](#).

So, while White veterans got into college with relative ease, Black service members faced [limited options and outright denial](#) in their pursuit for educational advancement. This resulted in [uneven outcomes](#) of the GI Bill’s impact.

[Hate-Crime Violence Hits 16-Year High, F.B.I. Reports](#) [Adeel Hassan, *The New York Times*, 2019-11-12]

Personal attacks motivated by bias or prejudice reached a 16-year high in 2018, the F.B.I. said Tuesday, with a significant upswing in violence against Latinos outpacing a drop in assaults targeting Muslims and Arab-Americans.

Over all, the number of hate crimes of all kinds reported in the United States remained fairly flat last year after a three-year increase, [according to an annual F.B.I. report](#). But while crimes against property were down, physical assaults against people were up, accounting for 61 percent of the 7,120 incidents classified as hate crimes by law enforcement officials nationwide.

State and local police forces are not required to report hate crimes to the F.B.I., but the bureau has made a significant effort in recent years to increase awareness and response rates. Still, many cities and some entire states failed to collect or report the data last year, limiting the conclusions that can be drawn from the F.B.I. report.

The F.B.I. defines [a hate crime](#) as a “criminal offense against a person or property, motivated in whole or in part by an offender’s bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity.” Victims of hate crimes can include institutions, religious organizations and government entities as well as individuals.

SEE ALSO:

[FBI Reports Dip In Hate Crimes, But Rise In Violence](#) [NPR, 2019-11-12]

[Victims of anti-Latino hate crimes soar in U.S.: FBI report](#) [Reuters, 2019-11-12]

U.S. Supreme Court weighs Comcast appeal in Byron Allen racial bias lawsuit

[Andrew Chung, Reuters, 2019-11-13]

U.S. Supreme Court justices on Wednesday expressed sympathy toward allowing comedian and producer Byron Allen to pursue his racial bias lawsuit accusing cable television operator Comcast Corp of discriminating against Black-owned channels.

Over the course of an hour of oral arguments, however, the justices struggled over whether a lower court that cleared the way for the \$20 billion lawsuit against Comcast to proceed had reviewed the case under the proper legal standard.

Their ruling, due by the end of June, could impact the ability of plaintiffs to enforce claims under the Civil Rights Act of 1866, a post-Civil War law that forbids racial discrimination in business contracts.

RELIGION

Christianity is declining at a rapid pace, but Americans still hold positive views about religion's role in society [Sarah Pulliam Bailey, *The Washington Post*, 2019-11-15]

Christianity has been [rapidly declining](#) in the United States while the number of Americans who are religiously unaffiliated is growing. [Gallup polls](#) have found a massive, three-decade fall in confidence in “organized religion” from as high as 66 percent in the mid-1980s to 36 percent in 2019. Pope Francis’s image [has declined](#) in [multiple surveys](#) in the wake of new revelations about sex abuse scandals.

But [Pew’s survey](#), published Friday, finds that Americans hold more-positive views of religion’s role overall and concerns about it declining. Fifty-five percent say churches and religious organizations do more good than harm in society (compared with 20 percent of people who think it does more harm than good). Similar majorities say religious organizations strengthen morality in society (53 percent), and 50 percent say they bring people together.

And among the 78 percent who think religion is losing influence in American life, 42 percent say that’s a bad thing, compared with 17 percent who say that’s a good thing (19 percent say it doesn’t make a difference).

How the US military embraced America’s religious diversity [Ronit Y. Stahl, *Military Times*, 2019-11-12]

In 1917, when the United States entered [World War I], chaplaincy was a majority White and fully Christian organization.

By Armistice Day, Nov. 11, 1918, Jews, Mormons and Christian Scientists had joined the ranks of the chaplain corps. As I write in my book, “[Enlisting Faith: How the Military Chaplaincy Shaped Religion and State in Modern America](#),” this significant change inaugurated a century-long project to redefine what counted as American religion.

In 2017, the Department of Defense [released](#) a new table of “Faith and Belief Codes” listing over 200 denominations and religious groups that includes Sikhs, Wiccans and Atheists.

SUICIDE

[Soldier deaths in South Korea put spotlight on US military suicide crisis](#) [Kim Gamel, *Stars and Stripes*, 2019-11-11]

The Pentagon reported that 541 service members died by [suicide](#) last year, up from 511 in 2017 and 482 in 2016, according to a report released in September.

Suicide rates for active-duty troops, which specialists say more accurately reflect trends, increased from 18.5 to 24.8 per 100,000 service members from 2013 to 2018.

The New York Times reported this month that suicide has been deadlier than combat for the military, citing congressional testimony from Rand Corp. researcher Terri Tanielian that more than 45,000 veterans or service members have killed themselves in the past six years.

VETERANS

[Here's how veterans stack up financially, compared to their non-veteran peers](#) [Karen Jowers, *Military Times*, 2019-11-14]

The [financial well-being of veterans](#) has improved over the last three years, as veterans have less difficulty covering expenses and bills, are less likely to have a drop in income, and more likely to have emergency funds and retirement savings in addition to employer plans, according to new research.

And veterans' [financial capability](#) is improving at a faster rate than Americans in general, according to the research, conducted by the [FINRA](#) Investor Education Foundation, based on the foundation's National Financial Capability Study survey of more than 3,000 veterans and 20,000 non-veterans.

The research compared the well-being of veterans in 2018 compared to the same survey in 2015; and also compared them to the population of non-veterans. Active-duty members aren't included in the research.

Compared to non-veterans in 2018, veterans overall have 6 percent less financial anxiety; 4 percent higher scores in financial well-being, and a 4 percent higher level of confidence in their financial abilities. In addition, veterans were 12 percent more likely to use financial technology for planning.

SEE ALSO:

[VA, DOD must do more to educate troops and veterans about social media scammers, lawmakers say](#) [*Military Times*, 2019-11-14]

[Veteran-owned and focused market research firm seeks online community of volunteers](#) [*Military Times*, 2019-11-11]

[Eight tips for vets who want to start their own businesses](#) [*Military Times*, 2019-11-13]

[Hire Our Heroes: Helping veterans transition from military service](#) [*Military Times*, 2019-11-07]

[Why the deeper, lasting costs of war are not reflected just in dollars and body counts](#) [Todd South, *Military Times*, 2019-11-14]

Impact from the past two decades of U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan can be seen in dollars spent, lives shattered by injury or trauma and [dead service members](#) carried home.

But a new collection of studies reveals at the [often unseen effects](#) of those wars both at home and abroad ranging from fractured families, strained caregivers, increased cancer rates to mistrust of [health workers](#), demolished infrastructure and military suicides.

"War and Health" is a collection of ethnographies covering a range of people affected from the wars beginnings, current day and likely long-term future ripples.

Researchers found military suicides, increased family violence and higher numbers of substance abuse and DUIs even among non-combat service members correlated with faster-paced deployment schedules and training.