

DEOMI NEWS LINKS, May 29, 2020

CULTURE

[A gender-neutral “Wild Blue Yonder”: Air Force finishes changing official song](#) [Stephen Losey, *Air Force Times*, 29 May 2020]

The Air Force is rolling out the final tweaks to its official song to remove the last references to just men, and make it more inclusive of the women in the service. In an interview May 19, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Dave Goldfein said that the line “at ‘em boys, give ‘er the gun” in the first verse of the U.S. Air Force Song will be changed to “at ‘em now, give ‘em the gun.” And in a release Friday, the Air Force outlined additional changes to the well-known song, which begins “Off we go, into the wild blue yonder.” The second verse will drop the gender-specific lines “Hands of men blasted the world asunder” and “Souls of men dreaming of skies to conquer” to “Valiant hands” and “Boundless souls.” The final verse will also change from “Flying men, guarding the nation’s border” to “Fly to fight,” the release said.

[These stick figure comics will change how you see the Coast Guard](#) [David Roza, *Task & Purpose*, 23 May 2020]

If you ask Brian Runion what he thought of his time at the Coast Guard Academy, he’s not going to sugarcoat his answer. “I hated it bitterly,” he told Task & Purpose. “It definitely improved me as a person, but it’s a difficult place to be. It has a very regimented lifestyle, and when you listen to all your friends talk about having a great time in college while you’re sitting in the barracks shining your shoes, it’s not the best time.” When most people think of the Coast Guard, they think of Coasties busting drug subs or plucking distressed mariners out of stormy seas, Runion explained. And while those missions are vital to national safety and security during peacetime, they leave out the Coast Guard’s 230 years of distinguished and impactful, yet largely unnoticed, wartime service.

[The space agency is hosting a range of global “NASA Social” events.](#) [Brandi Vincent, *Govexec*, 22 May 2020]

Two American astronauts will launch into space next Wednesday on American rockets from U.S. soil for the first time since the end of NASA’s Space Shuttle program in 2011. And for this initial flight of the new decade, the space agency aims to bring mission updates and a launch experience usually felt only by on-sight guests to the entire American public—through a [range of digital events](#), social media coverage and virtual access that’ll go beyond what was offered prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. “Through NASA’s virtual launch experience, we make it possible for more people than ever to watch the beginning of this new era in human spaceflight,” NASA’s Associate Administrator for Communications Bettina Inclán said in a statement.

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

DISCRIMINATION

[Transgender sports inclusion violates others’ rights](#) [Pat Eaton-Robb, *The Associated Press*, 28 May 2020]

Connecticut’s policy allowing transgender girls to compete as girls in high school sports violates the civil rights of athletes who have always identified as female, the U.S. Education Department has

determined in a decision that could force the state to change course to keep federal funding and influence others to do the same. A letter from the department's civil rights office, a copy of which was obtained Thursday by The Associated Press, came in response to a complaint filed last year by several cisgender female track athletes who argued that two transgender female runners had an unfair physical advantage.

[Transgender student Gavin Grimm's battle over bathroom access returns to court](#) [Ann E. Marimow, *The Washington Post*, 26 May 2020]

The case of Gavin Grimm, the transgender student barred from using the boys' bathroom at his Virginia high school, returned to court Tuesday before a three-judge panel that seemed divided over whether federal laws protect transgender students from discrimination. Judge James A. Wynn Jr. of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit said Grimm's school had essentially created separate, but equal accommodations similar to the segregated schools for Black children found unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1954.

DIVERSITY

[Costa Rica allows same-sex marriages in a first for Central America](#) [Oscar Lopez, *Reuters*, 26 May 2020]

Costa Rica gave the go-ahead to same-sex marriages on Tuesday, making it the first country in Central America to do so after a landmark court ruling came into effect at midnight. The nation's constitutional court ruled in August 2018 that a ban on same-sex marriage was unconstitutional and gave parliament 18 months to legislate or the provision would be automatically nullified.

[No longer too short to fly: Air Force lifts height restrictions for pilots](#) [Corey Dickstein, *Stars and Stripes*, 22 May 2020]

The Air Force on May 13 rescinded its 2015 policy that restricted pilot training to officers between 5 feet, 4 inches and 6 feet, 5 inches tall, unless they were granted a waiver to attend flight school, service officials said in a news release. With steady pilot shortages in recent years, the Air Force had encouraged individuals outside that height range to apply for a waiver and routinely granted them, officials said. Nonetheless, the height waiver process itself likely stopped many people from even considering pilot training, said Lt. Col. Jessica Ruttenber, an Air Force mobility planner who led the effort to change height standards. She said some 44% of female Americans between the ages of 20 and 29 would have had to receive a waiver to attend flight school under the old policy.

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

MISCELLANEOUS

[Larry Kramer, Playwright and Outspoken AIDS Activist, Dies at 84](#) [Daniel Lewis, *The New York Times*, 27 May 2020]

Larry Kramer, the noted writer whose raucous, antagonistic campaign for an all-out response to the AIDS crisis helped shift national health policy in the 1980s and '90s, died on Wednesday morning in Manhattan. He was 84. An author, essayist and playwright — notably hailed for his autobiographical 1985 play, "The Normal Heart" — Mr. Kramer had feet in both the world of letters and the public sphere. In 1981 he was a founder of the Gay Men's Health Crisis, the first

service organization for H.I.V.-positive people, though his fellow directors effectively kicked him out a year later for his aggressive approach. (He returned the compliment by calling them “a sad organization of sissies.”)

RACISM

[Police across U.S. speak out against Minneapolis custody death](#) [Stephanie Dazio, *The Associated Press*, 29 May 2020]

Murder. Brutality. Reprehensible. Indefensible. Police nationwide, in unequivocal and unprecedented language, have condemned the actions of Minneapolis police in the custody death of a handcuffed Black man who cried for help as an officer knelt on his neck, pinning him to the pavement for at least eight minutes. But some civil rights advocates say their denunciations are empty words without meaningful reform behind them. “There is no need to see more video,” Chattanooga, Tennessee, Police Chief David Roddy [tweeted](#) Wednesday. “There no need to wait to see how ‘it plays out’. There is no need to put a knee on someone’s neck for NINE minutes. There IS a need to DO something. If you wear a badge and you don’t have an issue with this ... turn it in.”

[Protesters torch Minneapolis police station in violent night](#) [Tim Sullivan and Amy Forliti, *The Associated Press*, 29 May 2020]

Thick smoke hovered over Minneapolis on Friday, hours after cheering protesters torched a police station that officers abandoned as a third night of violent protests flared over the death of George Floyd, a handcuffed Black man who pleaded for air as a White police officer knelt on his neck. Police evacuated the 3rd Precinct station, the focus of many of the protests, late Thursday to protect employees, a spokesman said. Livestream video showed protesters entering the building, where intentionally set fires activated smoke alarms and sprinklers.

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[Minneapolis venture capitalist loses office lease after viral video accuses him of racial profiling](#) [Kavita Kumar, *The Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, 28 May 2020]

A Minneapolis venture capitalist’s office lease has been terminated after a video went viral showing him asking a group of Black entrepreneurs if they were tenants of the building and thus allowed to use its gym. In the video posted Tuesday night, Tom Austin, who is White, said he was going to call 911 on the group. (He ended up calling the building’s property manager instead.) “Should have handled it differently,” he said in an e-mail. “Not my job to have done anything.”

[German minister blames far-right for rise in anti-Semitic crimes](#) [Caitlin McFall, *Fox News*, 28 May 2020]

Interior Minister Horst Seehofer [announced](#) Wednesday that anti-Semitic attacks rose by 13 percent from 2018-2019, blaming far right extremism. German police forces reported over 2,000 anti-Semitic offenses in 2019. According to the Ministry of Interior, 2019’s figures are the highest number in attacks recorded since statistical reporting began in 2001. Overall, politically motivated crimes were up 14 percent. “The greatest threat remains [from] right-wing extremism,” Seehofer said in a tweet Wednesday.

[Ahmaud Arbery killing being investigated as federal hate crime, family attorney says](#) [Angela Barajas and Martin Savidge, *CNN*, 26 May 2020]

S. Lee Merritt, an attorney for the family of Ahmaud Arbery, told CNN on Monday that the U.S. Department of Justice is investigating the shooting death as a hate crime. A Department of Justice spokesperson confirmed earlier this month that the Civil Rights Division of the department was assessing the evidence in the case to determine whether federal hate crime charges were appropriate. Georgia is one of a handful of states that does not have a hate crime statute.

[A White woman has apologized after calling police on a Black man and saying “there’s an African American man threatening my life”](#) [Amir Vera and Laura Ly, *CNN*, 26 May 2020]

A White woman has apologized for calling police on a Black man bird-watching in Central Park on Monday morning after the two argued about her unleashed dog. Amy Cooper told CNN she wanted to “publicly apologize to everyone.” “I’m not a racist. I did not mean to harm that man in any way,” she said, adding that she also didn’t mean any harm to the African American community.

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[African-Americans Are Highly Visible in the Military, but Almost Invisible at the Top](#) [Helene Cooper, *The New York Times*, 25 May 2020]

Some 43 percent of the 1.3 million men and women on active duty in the United States military are people of color. But the people making crucial decisions, such as how to respond to the coronavirus crisis and how many troops to send to Afghanistan or Syria, are almost entirely White and male. Of the 41 most senior commanders in the military — those with four-star rank in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard — only two are Black: Gen. Michael X. Garrett, who leads the Army’s Forces Command, and Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr, the commander of Pacific Air Forces.

[California woman arrested for posting racist notes at homes](#) [The Associated Press, 24 May 2020]

A woman in the San Francisco Bay Area has been arrested on suspicion of posting handwritten messages at several homes, targeting Asian Americans and suggesting that those not native to the United States should leave the country immediately. Police in San Leandro, a suburb of 89,000 just south of Oakland, said officers were called to the Heron Bay neighborhood Friday evening after receiving reports of notes containing “insensitive messages towards minorities” taped to five homes.

[Akim Aliu’s Account of Racism Pushes Hockey to Search Its Soul](#) [Salim Valji, *The New York Times*, 23 May 2020]

Akim Aliu, a former National Hockey League player, gave a harrowing account this week in [The Players’ Tribune](#) about his experiences with racism in the sport. Aliu’s unusually frank post — in which he challenged the culture of the sport and named his tormentor — intensified a debate within the hockey community about efforts to diversify. In the article, Aliu discussed a high-profile hazing incident that took place when he was 16 and playing with the Windsor Spitfires of the Ontario Hockey League. Aliu, 31, said that after he refused to strip naked for a rookie hazing ritual, a teammate retaliated by attacking him with a hockey stick in their next practice, knocking out seven of his teeth.

[Unreasonable Fear Is Killing Black Men in America—And There’s No Justification For It](#) [\[COMMENTARY\]](#) [David French, *Time.com*, 21 May 2020]

If you closely follow the twists and turns in many of the most recent high-profile shootings of Black men, you'll notice a pattern. First, only the slightest and smallest level of alleged misconduct or "suspicious" behavior is used to justify the killer's unreasonable fear. And second, even after the smoke clears, all too many members of the public will understand, forgive and perhaps even share that deadly terror. Americans still impose upon Black men the burden of their own unbalanced sense of risk. The injustice of the singular act of the shooting is magnified by a collective acceptance and defense of the shooter's extraordinary alarm

[Brutal beating in Iowa should be investigated as hate crime, NAACP says](#) [Tim Stelloh, NBC News, 20 May 2020]

Authorities in Iowa are investigating the alleged beating of a Black man who local civil rights activists say appears to be the victim of a hate crime. [Speaking to reporters Wednesday](#), DarQuan Jones, 22, said he suffered a broken arm, a broken nose and five broken bones in his face after the alleged assault last weekend by multiple White men.

RELIGION

[German military to include rabbis for first time since Hitler expelled them](#) [Deutsche Welle, (Bonn, Germany), 29 May 2020]

The Bundeswehr, Germany's armed forces, will allow military rabbis to see to the spiritual needs of Jewish soldiers for the first time in nearly a century, the German parliament agreed Thursday. The vote was unanimous. Until now soldiers in the German army could only turn to Christian military chaplains, either Protestant or Catholic. The defense minister also said she planned to introduce legislation to allow imams and Christian Orthodox priests to perform similar chaplaincy roles. On Twitter, she described it as a "historic day."

[Parents settle lawsuit over disabled son's forced baptism](#) [The Associated Press, 29 May 2020]

The parents of a disabled Ohio teen have settled a lawsuit against a church and others over what they said was the boy's forced baptism at a picnic in 2016, the parents' attorneys said. The confidential settlement on behalf of April and Gregg DeFibaugh and their son, identified as "V," was agreed to earlier this year in Lake County outside Cleveland. It was announced Thursday by a spokesman for the group American Atheists. The lawsuit claimed a man from a northeast Ohio Big Brothers Big Sisters group took the boy, then 11, to a Morning Star Friends Church picnic in August 2016 and told him he would stop taking him to minor league baseball games if he did not agree to be baptized.

[Muslims celebrate major holiday amid curfews, virus fears](#) [Joseph Krauss and Niniek Karmini, The Associated Press, 24 May 2020]

Muslims around the world on Sunday began celebrating Eid al-Fitr, a normally festive holiday marking the end of the fasting month of Ramadan, with millions under strict stay-at-home orders and many fearing renewed coronavirus outbreaks. The three-day holiday is usually a time of travel, family get-togethers and lavish daytime feasts after weeks of dawn-to-dusk fasting. But this year many of the world's 1.8 billion Muslims will have to pray at home and make due with video calls.

[German church opens doors for Muslim prayers](#) [BBC News, 23 May 2020]

A church in Berlin has opened its doors to Muslim worshippers unable to fit into their mosque under new social distancing rules. Germany allowed religious services to resume on 4 May but worshippers must maintain a distance of 1.5m (5ft). As a result the Dar Assalam mosque in the city's Neukölln district could only hold a fraction of its congregation. But the Martha Lutheran church in Kreuzberg offered to help by hosting Friday prayers at the end of Ramadan.

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[How non-religious worldviews provide solace in times of crisis](#) [Valerie van Mulukom, *The Conversation*, 21 May 2020]

The saying “There are no atheists in foxholes” suggests that in stressful times people inevitably turn to God (or indeed gods). In fact, non-believers have their own set of secular worldviews which can provide them with solace in difficult times, just as religious beliefs do for the spiritually-minded. The aim of my [research](#) for the [Understanding Unbelief](#) programme was to investigate the worldviews of non-believers, since [little is known](#) about the diversity of these non-religious beliefs, and what psychological functions they serve.

SEXISM

[Women Disproportionately Losing Their Jobs During Coronavirus Downturn](#) [Emma Coleman, *Route Fifty*, 28 May 2020]

The economic downturn brought on by the coronavirus pandemic is shaping up to be what some are calling a “she-cession.” That’s because, for the first time in history, women are more than half of the people filing for unemployment. In April, women made up [55% of the 20.5 million](#) people saying they lost their jobs—and, in some places, it’s even worse. (In Alabama, for example, women filed [67% of unemployment claims](#) one week.) For the first time since 1948, women’s unemployment has hit double digits and [stands at 16.2%](#) across the board—though [that number is higher](#) for Hispanic and African American women. By comparison, male unemployment is at 13%.

[Lawmakers Should Push the Pentagon to Draw on Women’s Contributions to Security](#) [OPINION] [Jamille Bigio and Rebecca Turkington, *Defense One*, 22 May 2020]

As Congress drafts this year’s defense spending bills amid pandemic, economic trauma, and uncertainty, lawmakers should increase their support for a proven, yet underused way to boost national security: fostering and drawing upon women’s contributions. Evidence that such efforts prevent conflict, counter terrorism, improve intelligence collection, and promote stability led lawmakers to pass the [2017 Women, Peace, and Security Act](#), and to support it with dedicated appropriations (including \$4 million in 2019 and \$7 million in 2020 for the Pentagon). Provisions in recent defense authorization bills have also nudged the Pentagon to better incorporate a gender perspective and increase women’s participation. Congressional support has been critical to the [Defense Department’s](#) progress.

SEXUAL ASSAULT/HARASSMENT

[Judge whose anti-rape advice was “close your legs” loses job](#) [Bruce Shipkowski, *The Associated Press*, 26 May 2020]

A judge who suggested that a woman seeking a restraining order could “close your legs” to prevent a sexual assault was removed from the bench Tuesday by the New Jersey Supreme Court and permanently barred from presiding over a courtroom. The unanimous decision cited “repeated and serious acts of misconduct” by state Superior Court Judge John Russo Jr. Chief Justice Stuart Rabner wrote that it would be “inconceivable” for Russo to preside over domestic violence or sexual assault matters after those comments.

SUICIDE

[Why do people commit suicide? Mental illness isn't the only cause – social factors like loneliness, financial ruin and shame can be triggers](#) [Jason Manning, *The Conversation*, 28 May 2020]

The U.S. suicide rate has been increasing for decades. In 1999, the rate was about [10 suicides per 100,000](#) people. In 2017, the most recent year for which complete statistics are available, it was just over [14 per 100,000](#) – a rise of 40% in only 18 years. That rates can change from one decade to another, and vary so much across regions, suggests that suicide is shaped by social conditions. Perhaps the most obvious of these is access to mental health services – psychiatrists, therapists and prescription antidepressants. Indeed, the most conventional way of talking about suicide in the modern world is in terms of mental health. This view is not incorrect: Clinical depression increases the risk of suicide, and so therapies that treat depression can help prevent it. But as a sociologist who studies suicide, I think the medical model of suicide is incomplete. My [research](#) shows there are additional causes.

[Seeking the Military Suicide Solution Podcast, Episode 20: Kate Hendricks Thomas](#) [*Military Times*, 27 May 2020]

Kate Hendricks Thomas is a behavioral medicine researcher and master certified health education specialist. She studies evidence-based mental fitness and peak performance and is the author of several books. Thomas is passionate about education and teaches for George Mason University's Department of Global and Community Health. Thomas is an academic researcher, storyteller, and U.S. Marine Corps veteran. Her TEDx speeches provide a glimpse into Thomas' unique ability to make science accessible and actionable for everyday audiences.

[\[LISTEN\]](#)

VETERANS

[Veterans disability exams to resume at some sites as backlog hits 114,000, nearly doubling in six months](#) [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 29 May 2020]

Veterans Affairs officials announced they will resume in-person compensation and pension exams at 20 department medical centers in coming weeks in an effort to bring down a backlog of benefits cases which has grown substantially since November due to the coronavirus pandemic. The exams backlog currently sits at 114,000 cases, up from 65,000 in November 2019. The news came just a day after lawmakers and veterans' advocates expressed concern that department leadership hasn't done enough to inform veterans about their plans to handle benefits cases stalled in recent months, as in-person exams were banned in almost all cases.

[Amid criticism, Secretary Wilkie won't commit to removing Nazi headstones from VA cemeteries](#)

[Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 28 May 2020]

House lawmakers on Thursday angrily demanded Veterans Affairs officials immediately remove a [series of grave markers bearing Nazi swastikas](#) and tributes to Adolf Hitler at a pair of department-run cemeteries, calling leadership's response so far confusing and offensive. But in his first public remarks on the controversy, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said he is looking for ways to "find a way to put this in historical context" rather than simply remove the problematic grave markers. "Anti-Semitism is rearing its head all over Europe and in some places in this country," he told members of the House Appropriations Committee during a hearing Thursday. "The last thing we need to do is to not remind Americans of the horrors of anti-Semitism and the Nazi cult.

[Veterans angered after Puerto Rican Veterans Memorial in South End vandalized](#) [Andrew Martinez,

The Boston Herald, 24 May 2020]

Veterans and officials are both angry and disappointed after the Puerto Rican Veterans Memorial in the South End was vandalized on the eve of Memorial Day, with two stones damaged, including one knocked over, and a Puerto Rican flag lowered. City Councilor Ed Flynn, a Navy veteran who also saw a World War II monument in his neighborhood vandalized last year with oil, called the action disrespectful. "On the eve of Memorial Day, for the men and women that paid the supreme sacrifice for our country, it's very insulting," Flynn said.

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