

## DEOMI NEWS LINKS 11 DECEMBER 2020

### HIGHLIGHTS

[Military Rape Cases Have No Statute of Limitations, Supreme Court Decides](#) [Patricia Kime, *Military.com*, 10 December 2020]

*In an 8-0 opinion issued Thursday, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that military personnel accused of a rape between 1986 and 2006—a period previously subject to a five-year statute of limitations—can be charged for the crime. Prior to 1996, the UCMJ held that rape was a crime punishable by death and therefore had no time limit for prosecuting the crime. A 1998 CAAF ruling established the five-year time limit, which remained in place until Congress moved to abolish it in 2006. The justices also agreed with government’s argument that rape is a particularly damaging crime in the military context because it disrupts good order and discipline. “Among other things, the government argues that a rape committed by a service member may cause special damage by critically undermining unit cohesion and discipline and that, in some circumstances, the crime may have serious international implications. That also appears to have been the view of Congress and the executive,” Judge Alito wrote.*

[In a first, a Black woman takes command of Army reserve command in Europe](#) [John Vandiver, *Stars and Stripes*, 8 December 2020]

*Brig. Gen. Wanda N. Williams assumed leadership of the Kaiserslautern-based 7th Mission Support Command on Tuesday, becoming the first Black woman to serve in a job that also makes her deputy commander of Army logistics efforts in Germany. Williams, one of only three Black women now serving as a general officer in the U.S. Army Reserve, will lead more than 1,000 soldiers and civilian personnel spread out across nearly 20 countries, U.S. Army Europe and Africa said in a statement. “It is a special day in Army Reserve history, because not only will Brig. Gen. Williams be the first woman to serve as Commander of the 7th Mission Support Command, she will be the first African-American woman to do so,” said Maj. Gen. Chris Mohan, head of the Kaiserslautern-based 21st Theater Sustainment Command.*

[A woman will take command of a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier for the first time in U.S. Navy history](#) [David Roza, *Task & Purpose*, 7 December 2020]

*The Navy has selected a woman to command a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier for the first time in American history. Capt. Amy Bauernschmidt was selected for the position by the fiscal year 2022 aviation major command screen board. Naval Air Forces confirmed the historic selection on Monday, though it’s not known at this point which of the Navy’s 11 nuclear-powered carriers Bauernschmidt will command. This isn’t the first time Bauernschmidt has made history. In 2016, she became the first female executive officer of a nuclear aircraft carrier, the USS Abraham Lincoln. As such, she was second-in-command of a crew of about 5,000 people. Bauernschmidt graduated from the Naval Academy in 1994, the same year women were allowed to serve on combat ships and planes.*

---

## CULTURE

### [For Air Force Leader, Making Video On Racism He’s Faced Was “The Right Thing To Do”](#)

[Rachel Martin, *NPR*, 11 December 2020]

*Just before Gen. Charles Q. Brown was confirmed as Air Force Chief of Staff in June, he issued an emotional and personal video message about racism in the military. At the time, the country was roiling in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd, and Brown, who is Black, felt compelled to speak out. On NPR’s Morning Edition, he explains why. “It was my own personal experiences but thinking about our two sons and their experiences, [is] actually what got me to do it,” Brown says. He was the commander of Pacific Air Forces at the time and was awaiting confirmation as the Air Force’s chief of staff.*

### [Soccer players lay down “marker” in fight against racism](#) [Rob Harris, *The Associated Press*, 9 December 2020]

*At the end of a year of striking gestures against racial injustice and discrimination, the Champions League produced one of soccer’s most powerful shows of solidarity against racism on Tuesday when players from Paris Saint-Germain and Istanbul Basaksehir left the field and didn’t return. “The walk off by both Basaksehir and PSG together lays down a marker in Europe,” Piara Powar, executive director of the anti-discrimination Fare network, told The Associated Press. “Many players are fed up with half measures to tackle racism and are more prepared than ever to exercise their right to stop a match.” Players have taken a knee, unfurled slogans and demanded tougher action only to find soccer—their working environment—remains infected with racism.*

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

### [Virginia Military Institute removing Confederate statue](#) [Sarah Ranki, *The Associated Press*, 7 December 2020]

*The Virginia Military Institute began work Monday to remove a prominent statue of Confederate Gen. Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson, an effort initiated this fall after allegations of systemic racism roiled the school. A crew was inspecting the statue at the public military college in Lexington, poised to haul away the figure of Jackson that some cadets were required to salute until several years ago. A small crowd gathered amid snow flurries to look on. VMI’s board [voted to remove](#) the statue in late October after *The Washington Post* published a story that described an “atmosphere of hostility and cultural insensitivity” at VMI. The piece detailed incidents such as lynching threats and a White professor reminiscing in class about her father’s Ku Klux Klan membership.*

### [“Hamilton” star Daveed Diggs brings his unique style to a new Hanukkah song](#) [Lauren M. Johnson, *CNN*, 5 December 2020]

*“Puppy for Hanukkah” is a hip-hop style song featuring the “Hamilton” star’s distinct vocals and is produced by Diggs with his longtime friends and creative partners William Hutson and Jonathan Snipes. “I was honored when Disney Channel approached me to come up with a fresh Hanukkah tune and embraced the opportunity to share my love of music and a little piece of my culture,” said Diggs in a [press release](#). “Daveed, William and Jonathan created a Hanukkah*

*song for the ages that's inventive, humorous and relevant as it celebrates the Miracle of Lights, the diverse world we live in, and the universal joy when a family adopts a pet into a child's life," said Steven Vincent, vice president of Music and Soundtracks, Disney Branded Television.*

[Southern schools' history textbooks: A long history of deception, and what the future holds](#)

[Brian Lyman, *The Montgomery Advertiser*, (Montgomery, Ala.), 3 December 2020]

*For much of the 20th century, Southern classrooms treated Black history—when they touched the subject at all—as a sideshow to a White-dominated narrative. Teachers taught students to sing Dixie and memorize long lists of forgettable governors. Civil War battles got described in detail. Textbooks celebrated the violent overthrow of democratically-elected, multiracial governments. Lynching went unmentioned. The evils of slavery got cursory acknowledgments—and quick dismissals. “It should be noted that slavery was the earliest form of social security in the United States,” a 1961 Alabama history textbook said, falsely. “With all the attention they received in terms of reference to the monuments, I think their most lasting impact was in controlling and censoring textbooks,” said Kevin Levin, a historian who has written on the Civil War in American memory. “That’s often overlooked.”*

[REPRINT]

## DISCRIMINATION

[Homophobic confrontation ignites strong feelings in Wyoming](#) [Nick Reynolds, *The Associated Press*, 5 December 2020]

*When she heard a knock on the door, Colin Monahan figured it had to be about the new garage. Monahan and her wife, Shannon Lastowski Monahan, had just finished dinner. Their guests had all departed, leaving the couple alone at their log home well off the main road in the rural community of Wapiti, a village of a few hundred in northwest Wyoming. The garage, as it turned out, wasn't the problem, the Casper Star-Tribune reported. Looking over the group, the Monahans—a same-sex couple originally from the Chicago area—recognized a familiar face, a man who the couple said had previously harassed them on social media. “One of the women said to us, ‘Your kind is not welcome here. You are not welcome in Cody Country and you need to leave,’” Shannon recalled in an interview shortly after the October incident. “She told Colin, ‘You pretend to be a man, and you need to leave.’”*

[Former Lincoln police officer files harassment lawsuit](#) [The Associated Press, 4 December 2020]

*A former Lincoln [Nebraska] police officer has filed a lawsuit against the city, alleging that female officers have been harassed and discriminated against and police officials have done nothing to improve a toxic culture toward women. Sarah Williams alleges several female officers have also reported being retaliated against if they complained, Gretna attorney Kelly Brandon wrote in the lawsuit. Williams said Police Chief Jeff Bliemeister and other top police officials have known about the “pervasive discrimination” against female officers in the department and have done nothing to protect the officers or improve the work environment, The Lincoln Journal-Star reported.*

[Rights Group Demands End to Sex Testing of Female Track Athletes](#) [Jeré Longman, *The New York Times*, 4 December 2020]

*With the rescheduled Tokyo Olympics approaching in July, Human Rights Watch on Friday demanded that track and field officials halt sex testing of female athletes, describing the practice of measuring and restricting their natural testosterone levels as abusive and harmful. Sex testing has been a deeply contentious issue in sports for decades, but the dispute has been heightened since 2018, when track and field's world governing body instituted its latest rules regarding intersex athletes like Caster Semenya of South Africa, a two-time Olympic champion runner at 800 meters. The sport's regulations have inflamed debates about biological sex, gender identity and fair play. World Athletics, track and field's governing body, acknowledges that the restrictions are discriminatory, but says they are necessary to ensure a level playing field.*

## DIVERSITY

[How Air Force Global Strike Command Is Cultivating Diversity & Inclusion](#) [Jennifer-Leigh Oprihory, *Air Force Magazine*, 9 December 2020]

*As the public [awaits the findings](#) of the Department of the Air Force's recent diversity and inclusion survey, major commands across USAF are launching their own efforts to make these departmental priorities the norm. In the case of Air Force Global Strike Command, these efforts are divided between its component numbered Air Forces: 8th Air Force and 20th Air Force. Eighth Air Force, which calls Barksdale Air Force Base, La., home and handles the bomber side of AFGSC's wheelhouse, has been primarily tackling diversity and inclusion through dialogue and education, Command Chief Master Sgt. Melvina A. Smith told *Air Force Magazine* in a September interview. In response to the civil unrest that gripped the country after George Floyd's Memorial Day death in police custody, the NAF's headquarters "engaged in some very intimate discussions about dialoguing with diversity, inclusion, and even racial unrest," Smith said.*

[Raimondo makes historic nomination to state Supreme Court](#) [*The Associated Press*, 8 December 2020]

*Gov. Gina Raimondo nominated two women Tuesday to the Rhode Island Supreme Court, including one who, if confirmed, would become not only the first Black justice, but also the first person of color on the state's highest court. If Long and Lynch Prata are confirmed, the five-member court will be majority female for the first time. "I am thrilled to appoint this group of talented public servants to our state's highest courts," Raimondo said in a statement. "As governor, one of my most important and sacred responsibilities is to appoint high-caliber judges who reflect the diversity of the Rhode Islanders they serve. I am confident that each of these nominees will fairly and honorably uphold the laws and values of our state."*

[A Record Number of Women Will Serve in Statehouses Next Year](#) [Barbara Rodriguez, *The 19th*, 8 December 2020]

*New data shows women will represent just over 30 percent of all legislative seats, and will increase the number of women-majority chambers. A record number of women will serve in statehouses around the country after the 2020 election, [according to new data](#). At least 2,236 women will be state lawmakers when America's legislatures return for their next sessions,*

*according to an analysis released this month by the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University (CAWP), which tracks women's political power in state and federal offices. Jean Sinzdak, associate director for CAWP, said there was a time when the percentage of women in statehouses hovered between 20 and 25 percent for multiple election cycles. She called the 30 percent threshold "significant."*

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

[Biden picks Lloyd Austin, retired Army general, to lead Pentagon](#) [Aaron Mehta and Joe Gould, *Defense News*, 7 December 2020]

*President-elect Joe Biden has reportedly selected Lloyd Austin III, a retired four-star Army general who most recently led the fights in Afghanistan and Iraq, as his nominee for defense secretary. Austin would become the first Black leader of the department if confirmed, but likely faces a steep path because he will require a waiver from Congress due to his recent service, an exception granted to only two secretary nominees in the last century. According to Title 10 of the United States Code, the defense secretary is among nine Senate-confirmed roles at the Pentagon that would require a waiver if the nominee has been a military officer in the last seven years. Austin retired from the Army in May 2016.*

[MSNBC is getting a new president, the first Black person to run a major cable news network](#) [Brian Stetler, *CNN Business*, 7 December 2020]

*Rashida Jones, a senior vice president with a wide portfolio at NBC News and MSNBC, will become president of the network on February 1. The Wall Street Journal, which broke the news of her appointment, said that Jones will be the first Black person to run a major cable news network. Jones has been at MSNBC and NBC News since 2013. She previously worked at The Weather Channel and at local stations. She rose through the ranks at NBC and became the senior vice president for specials in 2017.*

[The disabled activist who led a historic 24-day sit-in](#) [Lucy Wallis, *BBC World Service*, 6 December 2020]

*The UK is marking 25 years of the Disability Discrimination Act, while this year is also the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. But the U.S. law owes much to a group of disabled people who staged a sit-in more than a decade earlier—led by a determined young activist, Judy Heumann. "We were very, very concerned that they were going to make drastic changes to the rules," says Judy. "We had been fighting very hard for many years to get the rules [to] where they were. So we said, if the regulations were not signed by a certain day there would be demonstrations around the country in nine or 10 cities." But the date came, and nothing had happened. So the protests began. "Blind people, deaf people, wheelchair users, disabled veterans, people with developmental and psychiatric disabilities and many others, all came together," as Judy has described it. Judy was among 150 who staged a sit-in at the Health, Education and Welfare building in San Francisco, refusing to leave until Califano signed the regulations.*

**MISCELLANEOUS**

[American Mental Health Hits 20-Year Low](#) [Emma Coleman, *Route Fifty*, 7 December 2020]

*The coronavirus pandemic and its associated lockdowns, prolonged unemployment, social isolation, and general uncertainty appear to have contributed to a decline in Americans' mental health—to the point where self-assessments have hit a nearly 20-year low. Seventy-six percent of adults now rate their mental health as “excellent” or “good,” a nine-point decline from 2019, according to a [new Gallup poll](#) that surveyed 1,018 people between November 5 and November 19. Since 2001, the polling and research firm has been surveying Americans about their mental and emotional wellbeing, and in each of those years, between 81% and 89% of respondents had a positive outlook on their health. The decrease is found in the reduced number of people rating their mental health as excellent—34% this year compared to 43% last year. The same percentage of people—42%—said their mental health was good this year compared to last year.*

[Trump Admin to Rename Two Bases for Space Force Over Military Objections](#) [Marcus Weisgerber, *Defense One*, 7 December 2020]

*The U.S. Air Force plans to change the names of two Florida military bases heavily involved in Space Force operations during a Wednesday ceremony with a guest list including Vice President Mike Pence, *Defense One* has learned. The Air Force had quietly agreed with Congress not to change anything until the NDAA settles a way forward on Confederate base names. The renaming ceremony has been ordered by top Trump administration officials as part of the Space Force's first birthday. Patrick Air Force Base will be renamed Patrick Space Force Base and Cape Canaveral Air Force Station will be renamed Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, the officials said. Both bases are involved with launching military rockets on the cape. The bases will still be overseen by the Department of the Air Force, which also oversees the Space Force.*

[“A lost generation”: Surge of research reveals students sliding backward, most vulnerable worst affected](#) [Laura Meckler and Hannah Natanson, *The Washington Post*, 6 December 2020]

*After the U.S. education system fractured into Zoom screens last spring, experts feared millions of children would fall behind. Hard evidence now shows they were right. A flood of new data—on the national, state and district levels—finds students began this academic year behind. Most of the research concludes students of color and those in high-poverty communities fell further behind their peers, exacerbating long-standing gaps in American education. A [study being released this week by McKinsey & Co.](#) estimates that the shift to remote school in the spring set White students back by one to three months in math, while students of color lost three to five months. As the coronavirus pandemic persists through this academic year, McKinsey said, losses will escalate. “I think we should be very concerned about the risk of a lost generation of students,” said former education secretary John B. King Jr., who is now president of Education Trust, an advocacy and research group focused on equity issues.*

## MISCONDUCT

[House chairman calls for VA secretary to resign over handling of sex assault case](#) [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 10 December 2020]

*The chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee on Thursday called for VA Secretary Robert Wilkie and key members of his leadership team to resign immediately over the handling of*

*a sexual assault allegation made by congressional staffer. “When the most senior leadership of VA are derelict in their duty, refuse to take immediate action to correct glaring deficiencies, and are themselves complicit in attempts to discredit and cast doubt on the facts, they betray the public trust and as a result disqualify themselves from all future public service,” Rep. Mark Takano, D-Calif., said in a statement Thursday following the release of an [Inspector General report](#) that criticized Wilkie’s actions in office.*

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[Navy chief convicted for Bahrain sex crimes loses court appeal](#) [Geoff Ziezulewicz, *Navy Times*. 9 December 2020]

*A military appellate court has upheld the conviction of a former U.S. Navy chief who pleaded guilty last year to sex crimes that occurred while he was stationed in Bahrain. The case of former Chief Logistics Specialist Calvin Halfacre was one of a rash of sex and trafficking cases involving Thai women and sailors stationed on the Middle Eastern island in 2017. That year, three women working as prostitutes accused Halfacre of brutally raping them in his off-base apartment. Navy prosecutors lost track of the women and none were available to testify against the chief at his trial in 2019. An appeal filed in the Navy-Marine Corps Court of Criminal Appeals by Halfacre’s attorney later argued that the judge improperly considered evidence at sentencing involving the sexual assault allegations, which went beyond the prostitution charges to which Halfacre pleaded guilty.*

[Army to fire, suspend officers and enlisted soldiers over violence at Fort Hood](#) [Lolita C. Baldor, *The Associated Press*, 8 December 2020]

*U.S. Army leaders are expected to fire or suspend a “significant number” of officers and enlisted soldiers at Fort Hood, Texas, in a dramatic purge to correct a command culture they believe failed to address leadership failures and a pattern of violence that included murders, sexual assaults and suicides, U.S. officials said Monday. According to officials familiar with the matter, Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy will take administrative action that will remove soldiers from their jobs, and likely trigger investigations that could lead to a wide range of punishments. Those punishments could go from a simple letter of reprimand to a military discharge. McCarthy and other senior Army leaders are expected to announce the results of the review on Tuesday. In recent months, they have questioned whether there is a toxic environment at the base, and pledged to hold leaders accountable.*

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#) [\[REPRINT\]](#)

## **RACISM**

[Police: Man assaulted family with Black Lives Matter sign](#) [*The Associated Press*, 9 December 2020]

*A White North Carolina man has been accused of assaulting two people whose car displayed a homemade Black Lives Matter sign and another that honored Breonna Taylor, a Black woman who was killed in a police raid earlier this year in Kentucky. According to arrest warrants, Rod Steven Sturdy, 55, of Lewisville, faces two misdemeanor charges of simple assault and assault on a female. The warrants said Sturdy punched Olivia Pugh and her juvenile brother in the face.*

*Helen Parsonage, the family's attorney, said the incident began when three people, including Pugh and her brother, were driving to a dental appointment. Parsonage said Sturdy tailgated the family's car and then blocked it in a parking lot. Parsonage said Sturdy hit Pugh and her brother in the face and used a racial slur.*

[Racism at the County Level Associated with Increased COVID-19 Cases and Deaths](#) [George B. Cunningham and Lisa T. Wigfall, *GovExec*, 8 December 2020]

*Scientists have shown that racial and ethnic minorities are more likely than White people to catch, be hospitalized because of and ultimately die from the virus. In explaining these findings, [researchers](#) often point to patterns within society that advantage White people over racial and ethnic minorities. These patterns reflect systemic racism or institutional racism. As Mary Frances O'Dowd, a senior lecturer of Indigenous Studies at CQUniversity Australia, explains, these refer "to how ideas of White superiority are captured in everyday thinking at a systems level: taking in the big picture of how society operates, rather than looking at one-on-one interactions." As researchers who study diversity and health, we put this idea [to the test](#). Specifically, we tested whether different forms of racism at the county level were linked to COVID-19 cases and deaths. The answer is yes, racism predicts COVID-19 outcomes, even after taking into account a host of other health and demographic factors.*

[Racial microaggressions take a major toll on Black Americans](#) [Michelle Singletary, *The Washington Post*, 4 December 2020] [COMMENTARY]

*I can't do my two favorite things right now—traveling and attending the theater with my family—because of the coronavirus. But when I can do these activities again, I have a simple request for White vacationers and theatergoers: Please stop staring at us. Don't compliment us for doing what comes naturally. "Microaggressions are the everyday slights, insults, indignities, put-downs and allegations that people of color experience in their day-to-day interactions with well-intentioned White [people]," said Derald Wing Sue, a psychology professor at Columbia University and author of "Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation." Sue writes in his book: "The power of microaggressions lies in their invisibility to the perpetrator, who is unaware that he or she has engaged in a behavior that threatens and demeans the recipient of such a communication." In business, "microinequities" result in Black workers being overlooked, under-respected and devalued. But a lot of White people don't see the harm they are doing.*

[A family got a racist note after putting up a Black Santa. Soon, neighbors began displaying their own Black Santas.](#) [Sydney Page, *The Washington Post*, 3 December 2020]

*The spirited Christmas display, which the Kennedys have showcased for the last few holiday seasons, had only been met with cheer in their neighborhood of Lakewood, Chris Kennedy said. That changed Nov. 23, when Kennedy, 33, checked his mailbox and was stunned to find an anonymous, racist letter attacking the seven-foot Black Santa on his lawn. "Please remove your negro Santa Claus yard decoration," the letter, signed "Santa Claus," demanded. "You should try not to deceive children into believing that I am negro. I am a caucasian (White man, to you) and have been for the past 600 years. Your being jealous of my race is no excuse for your dishonesty. Besides that, you are making yourself the laughing stock of the neighborhood.*

*Obviously, your values are not that of the Lakewood area and maybe you should move to a neighborhood out east with the rest of your racist kind.” The letter included an image of a White Santa Claus, with two thumbs pointing down.*

## RELIGION

[U.S. Jews plan smaller Hanukkah celebrations amid virus](#) [Elana Schor and Luis Andres Henao, *The Associated Press*, 11 December 2020]

*Jewish Americans from a variety of branches of the faith are celebrating Hanukkah with smaller-than-usual gatherings this year, in hopes of keeping the year-end holiday safe but still joyful as coronavirus cases spike across the country. Many Jewish Americans are already accustomed to more intimate celebrations of a holiday focused more on the home than on the synagogue, including Haredim or ultra-Orthodox communities. So the recent successful Supreme Court challenge to New York restrictions on in-person worship by some Orthodox groups won’t mean much as far as their Hanukkah plans. But celebrating Hanukkah during a pandemic still poses a challenge to some Jewish Americans, for whom the holiday has risen in prominence in part because its social elements and timing line up with non-Jewish holidays such as Christmas.*

[Justices rule Muslim men can sue FBI agents over no-fly list](#) [Mark Sherman, *The Associated Press*, 10 December 2020]

*A unanimous [Supreme Court ruled](#) on Thursday that Muslim men who were placed on the government’s no-fly list because they refused to serve as FBI informants can seek to hold federal agents financially liable. The justices continued a string of decisions friendly to religious interests in holding that the men could sue the agents under the [1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act](#) for what it calls “appropriate relief.” The three foreign-born men claim in the lawsuit that their religious convictions led them to rebuff agents who wanted them to inform on people in their Muslim communities. “This is a clear prohibition in the Islamic faith,” Ramzi Kassem, the men’s lawyer, told the justices during arguments in October.*

[Trump Administration Finalizes Rule to Protect Religion-Based Federal Contractors](#) [Courtney Bubl , *GovExec*, 7 December 2020]

*The Labor Department’s Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs said its [upcoming rule](#) will provide a “clearer interpretation” of the exceptions of Title VII and the 1965 executive order that established non-discriminatory practices for federal contractors, but noted that “religious organizations may prefer in employment ‘individuals of a particular religion.’” “The final rule would significantly expand eligibility for federal contractors to claim a religious exemption from non-discrimination rules,” Matt Kent, regulatory policy associate at Public Citizen, an advocacy nonprofit, told Government Executive. “It’s an invitation for any contractor that’s loosely affiliated with a religious purpose to discriminate against LGBTQ employees. Yet another major, ideologically driven last-minute rule change from the Trump administration.” American Atheists, an organization advocates for civil liberties for atheists and separation of religion and government, also criticized the rule. “Job applicants and workers should not have to pass a religious litmus test, especially when it comes to government funded contracts,” said*

*Alison Gill, the group's vice president for legal and policy. "The American taxpayer should not be forced to fund discrimination, period."*

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

## SEXISM

[Sex Is Still a Taboo Topic in the U.S. Military. It's Time to Change That](#) [Jacqueline Garrick, *Military.com*, 7 December 2020] [OPINION]

*Long after the sexual revolution of the 1960s, which challenged cultural and moral attitudes about human sexuality, sex is still a taboo topic for the U.S. armed forces. The military's approach to sexuality and sexual health within its ranks has remained largely ineffective and reactive. Therefore, similar to other constructed Defense Centers of Excellence, a Military Sexual Health Center of Excellence (MSHCoE) could provide research and education to benefit members of the armed forces who are dealing with issues related to a range of sexual health and intimacy issues—including those that underlie mental health, substance abuse and suicide ideation challenges.*

## SEXUAL ASSAULT/HARASSMENT

[At stadium gathering of enlisted, Fort Hood soldiers tell their stories of sexual assault](#) [Rose L. Thayer, *Stars and Stripes*, 9 December 2020]

*Standing in parade rest, an Army specialist on Tuesday told Lt. Gen. Pat White, commander of the central Texas base, about being raped there by a fellow soldier in her unit, and then having to live in the same barracks building with him. Behind her, nearly 2,000 other soldiers sat silent in the blue bleachers of Hood Stadium as she described her failed attempts to receive therapy and her constant fear of seeing her perpetrator. "He was partying with people right there next to my room. I was scared, but I couldn't do anything about that," said the soldier, who is not being identified because she was the victim of an assault. Her chain of command did not know what to do "because they are not getting the proper training," she said. "We need people who care and not just take it with a grain of salt. It's not a joke. It really messes people's lives up."*

[SEE ALSO [1](#), [2](#), [3](#)]

[India's rape laws don't cover transgender people. They say it's putting them at risk](#) [Esha Mitra, *CNN*, 9 December 2020]

*According to a survey of nearly 5,000 transgender people by the National AIDS Control Organization in 2014-15, one fifth said they had experienced sexual violence in the past 12 months. India has imposed tougher penalties for rape in recent years, after a series of sickening attacks on women and girls prompted nationwide protests. But activists say not enough is being done to protect other genders. Offenses against transgender people are punishable under the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2019. For example, the punishment for the physical and sexual abuse of transgender people is a minimum of six months and a maximum of two years in prison with a fine. However, men found guilty of raping a woman are sentenced to a minimum of 10 years in prison, which may be extended to life. Activists say lighter sentences*

*make transgender people more vulnerable to attack, by sending a message to society that their lives aren't worth protecting.*

[Sexual Misconduct Allegations Cast Shadow on Nonprofit that Works with Colleges to Help Injured Veterans](#) [Jie Jenny Zou, *The Los Angeles Times*, 6 December 2020]

*The tech entrepreneur [Jon Monett] founded Quality of Life Plus, a nonprofit that connects engineering students with injured veterans to build custom-made prosthetics and assistive devices. Launched in 2009 at Monett's alma mater, California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo, the flagship program had hit its stride in recent years, expanding to 19 colleges nationwide. But newly surfaced allegations of sexual misconduct by Monett and concerns of a toxic workplace are now threatening to derail the organization. Emails reviewed by the Los Angeles Times detail at least two alleged instances of sexual misconduct by Monett, against a former employee in 2017 and an unidentified woman at Cal Poly. Current and former employees who spoke to the Times described a "toxic" and retaliatory workplace tethered to Monett, who handpicked much of the organization's current staff and board members.*

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

## SUICIDE

[New England VA holds virtual suicide prevention conference](#) [Julia LeDoux, *Connecting Vets*, 6 December 2020]

*The VA New England Healthcare System recently hosted an online conference called "#BeThere for Service Members, Veterans and Families: Strengthening Our Communities" that sought to form stronger relationships to prevent veteran suicides across the region. According to a VA blog post, among the more than 250 attendees were librarians, gun shop owners, educators, social workers, medical directors of veteran services and leaders of the faith-based community. "We know that VA can't do this alone," said Ryan Lilly, VA New England Healthcare System director. "It's really going to take every entity, every individual, and every organization that interacts with veterans on a routine basis to help us get there." Many participants said the COVID-19 pandemic has added to the stress veterans feel as they readjust to civilian life and face economic challenges.*

[Psychological health specialist there for Airmen, Soldiers wellness during the holidays](#) [Master Sgt. David Eichaker, *DVIDS*, 4 December 2020]

*The Michigan Department of Veterans Affairs and Michigan National Guard have the responsibility of supporting and protecting those who defend our country, and so it is imperative that everything possible is done to prevent suicide in the military community. "The holidays are traditionally when everyone can take time off from work and connect with people they care about and break their routine and travel," said Sonya Bilski, director of psychological health (DPH), Michigan Air National Guard. "With COVID-19 surging across most of the country, these activities aren't safe at this time." The psychological health office's primary focus is on the Guard member. The health program's four goals are to improve mental health, ensure ready access to care, improve value of mental health care delivery through standardization, and*

*provide short-term, solution-focused support to members who are experiencing interpersonal difficulties.*

## VETERANS

[Chinese Americans who served in WWII honored by Congress](#) [Matthew Daly, *The Associated Press*, 10 December 2020]

*Seventy-five years after World War II ended, Congress is honoring thousands of Chinese Americans who served the United States in the war, earning citations for heroism—including the Medal of Honor—despite discrimination that included limits on numbers allowed in the U.S. Nearly 20,000 people of Chinese ancestry served in the U.S. military during World War II, including about 40 percent who were not U.S. citizens due to laws such as the Chinese Exclusion Act. That law made it illegal for Chinese laborers to immigrate to America and limited the Chinese population in the U.S. for more than 60 years. For their service to the nation during the war, Chinese-American veterans were honored at a Congressional Gold Medal ceremony Wednesday.*

[Chuck Yeager, 1st to break sound barrier, dies at 97](#) [*The Associated Press*, 8 December 2020]

*Retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Charles “Chuck” Yeager, the World War II fighter pilot ace and quintessential test pilot who showed he had the “right stuff” when in 1947 he became the first person to fly faster than sound, has died. He was 97. Yeager died Monday, his wife, Victoria Yeager, said on his Twitter account. “It is w/ profound sorrow, I must tell you that my life love General Chuck Yeager passed just before 9pm ET. An incredible life well lived, America’s greatest Pilot, & a legacy of strength, adventure, & patriotism will be remembered forever.” Yeager’s death is “a tremendous loss to our nation,” NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine said in a statement.*

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

[Remains Of Four Pearl Harbor Sailors ID’d as Nation Marks 79th Anniversary of Attacks](#)

[Richard Sisk, *Military.com*, 7 December 2020]

*Officially, the U.S. death toll in the Dec. 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor is 2,403. But the books have yet to be closed on identifying the available remains of more than 150 of those killed on what President Franklin D. Roosevelt called a “day that will live in infamy.” Ahead of remembrance ceremonies in Hawaii on the 79th anniversary of the attacks, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced Dec. 1 that the remains of four more sailors from that day had been identified, including two brothers. All of the fallen from the Pearl Harbor attacks and the dwindling number of survivors will be honored Monday at the 79th National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day ceremonies. Adm. John Aquilino, commander of U.S. Pacific Fleet, will make remarks aboard the battleship Missouri memorial and museum.*