

## DEOMI NEWS LINKS 25 DECEMBER 2020

### HIGHLIGHTS

[Department of the Air Force releases findings on racial disparity review](#) [SECAF Public Affairs, Department of the Air Force News Service, 21 December 2020]

*The Department of the Air Force released its report on the findings of an Air Force Inspector General independent review into racial disparity Dec. 21. The [full report](#) is available for download on AF.mil. The Secretary of the Air Force and the Air and Space Forces service chiefs ordered the review June 2. The measure formalized a step that former Chief of Staff of the Air Force Gen. David Goldfein raised in an official note to commanders and other senior leaders on June 1 addressing an “apparent inequity in our application of military justice” among other issues. The IG review focused specifically on assessing racial disparity in military discipline processes and personnel development and career opportunities as they pertain to Black/African American Airmen and Space Professionals. “Although release of this report took longer than we originally planned, we’re confident that the lessons we will learn and the plans in development to further examine disparities will provide benefit to all of our Airmen and Space Professionals,” said Lt. Gen. Sami Said, Air Force Inspector General.*

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[The military needs to crack down on extremists within the ranks, Pentagon report finds](#) [Jeff Schogol, *Task & Purpose*, 21 December 2020]

*Released on Friday night, the report found the Defense Department does not adequately track service members that have been radicalized by White supremacist groups. It also determined that the Uniform Code of Military Justice needs to be updated to address extremist activities by troops. “DoD requires further attention to service member extremist activities to counter the efforts of extremist groups to recruit service members to engage in their violent activities,” the report says. “Proactive steps that will mitigate the factors enabling extremist groups to successfully recruit and radicalize military members are needed.” In response to the report’s findings, Acting Defense Secretary Miller has ordered defense officials to submit a report by March 31 to address how to more effectively prohibit hate group activity within the military. The report will include a plan of action with milestones to be completed, followed by a second report by June 30.*

[Pentagon memo maps out plan to expand diversity in the force](#) [Lolita C. Baldor, *The Associated Press*, 18 December 2020]

*The Pentagon has endorsed a new slate of initiatives to expand diversity within the ranks and reduce prejudice, calling for more aggressive efforts to recruit, retain and promote a more racially and ethnically diverse force, The Associated Press learned on Friday. Acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller on Thursday signed a [memo](#) ordering the implementation of 15 broad recommendations that include a plan to crack down on participation in hate groups by service members and draft proposed changes to the Uniform Code of Military Justice. The AP obtained a copy of the memo on Friday. “I expect all leaders to take an aggressive approach to*

*embed diversity and inclusion practices into the core of our military culture,” Miller said in the memo. “We must not accept—and must intentionally and proactively remove—any barriers to an inclusive and diverse force and equitable treatment of every service member.”*

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

---

## CULTURE

[Gal Gadot defends Cleopatra casting after “whitewashing” controversy](#) [BBC News, 22 December 2020]

*Critics say an Arab or African actress should play the ancient Egyptian queen. “First of all if you want to be true to the facts then Cleopatra was Macedonian,” the Wonder Woman actress told BBC Arabic’s Sam Asi. “We were looking for a Macedonian actress that could fit Cleopatra. She wasn’t there, and I was very passionate about Cleopatra.” Controversy erupted in October after Gadot announced that she would star in and co-produce the film. The Guardian’s Hanna Flint called it “a backwards step for Hollywood representation”, while director Lexi Alexander said a Black actress should be cast, citing a reconstruction of Cleopatra’s face. Gadot said: “I have friends from across the globe, whether they’re Muslims or Christian or Catholic or atheist or Buddhist, or Jewish of course... People are people, and with me I want to celebrate the legacy of Cleopatra and honour this amazing historic icon that I admire so much.”*

[Judge won’t try Black man in courtroom with White portraits](#) [Matthew Barakat, *The Associated Press*, 22 December 2020]

*A Black defendant’s right to a fair trial would be harmed if the jury heard the case in a courtroom lined with portraits of White jurists, a northern Virginia judge has ruled. The upcoming trial of Terrance Shipp on charges of eluding police will be held in a courtroom that has no portraits on the wall, said Fairfax County Circuit Court Judge David Bernhard. Bernhard noted that his usual courtroom has no portraits. But jury trials that were postponed during the coronavirus pandemics are now being held in larger courtrooms. The walls of those rooms are lined with portraits of retired judges who are overwhelmingly White, he said. Dawn Butorac, the chief public defender in Fairfax County, called the judge’s ruling “a very, very, very small step in a long overdue journey to battle systemic racism” in the judicial system.*

[New dorms at University of Maryland honor students of color](#) [The Associated Press, 22 December 2020]

*Officials at the University of Maryland in College Park say they will name two new residence halls after former students who helped diversify the campus in the 19th and 20th centuries. The Washington Post reported Monday that Whittle-Johnson Hall will honor two people. One is Hiram Whittle. In 1951, he was the first Black man to be admitted to the university. The other is Elaine Johnson Coates. In 1959, she became the first Black woman to graduate with an undergraduate degree. Another building will pay tribute to Pyon Su and Chunjen Constant Chen. It will be called Pyon-Chen Hall.*

[Virginia's Lee statue has been removed from the U.S. Capitol](#) [*The Associated Press*, 21 December 2020]

*A statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee that has represented Virginia in the U.S. Capitol for 111 years has been removed. Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam had requested the removal and a state commission decided that Lee was not a fitting symbol for the state. Lee's statue had stood with George Washington's statue since 1909 as Virginia's representatives in the Capitol. Every state gets two statues. The state commission has recommended replacing Lee's statue with a statue of Barbara Johns. She protested conditions at her all-Black high school in the town of Farmville in 1951. Her court case became part of the landmark Brown v. Board of Education decision by the U.S. Supreme Court. The ruling had struck down racial segregation in public schools.*

## DISCRIMINATION

[Private military housing companies face questions about military families with disabled members](#) [*Karen Jowers, Military Times*, 22 December 2020]

*Some private companies that have partnered with the Defense Department "do not appear to be following federal laws that protect persons with disabilities," according to letters sent Dec. 18 to top executives of six companies, signed by Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., and Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C. Citing the findings of a small online survey released in July by the nonprofit Military Housing Advocacy Network, the senators asked the executives for details about each of their military housing communities by Jan. 15. The survey findings "painted a clear and troubling picture of housing problems for thousands of service members and their families, revealing that many military families are being denied access to Americans with Disabilities Act compliant housing," the senators wrote. They asked for the details "in order to better understand why [special needs] families are not receiving ADA-compliant homes or reasonable accommodations."*

[A shaving profile might be bad for your Air Force career](#) [*David Roza, Task & Purpose*, 22 December 2020]

*Many airmen with shaving profiles said that the profiles had negatively impacted their military career by disqualifying them from prestigious positions, leadership opportunities, or awards, according to a [new study](#) published in the journal *Military Medicine*. Led by several Air Force doctors, the study heard from many airmen who said a shaving waiver had barred them from opportunities such as Honor Guard duty, the Air Force Band, Air Force recruiting positions, and Airman Leadership School instructor positions, all of which are career fields or duties with historically high rates of promotion, the study authors wrote. Other airmen said that they were looked down upon by their commanders and colleagues. Compounding the problem is the fact that 63% of the respondents who reported a perceived shaving profile bias identified as Black, the report found. Of the rest, 18% identified as white, 14% as Hispanic and 5% as Latino.*

[Older judges forced from NY bench sue for age discrimination](#) [*The Associated Press*, 21 December 2020]

*A group of New York judges is suing for age discrimination after the state's cash-strapped court system cracked down on a long-standing practice that had allowed them to continue serving past the mandatory retirement age of 70. The New York Times reported Monday that nine older judges are involved in two lawsuits stemming from the court system's decision to reject the applications of 46 of 49 judges who have sought to continue to working in their 70s. They must leave by Dec. 31. Court rules allow judges who reach age 70 to apply for two-year extensions to remain on the bench until they are 76, as long as they receive necessary medical clearance. There is no requirement that the court system approve the applications, but the judges who are suing allege they were decided on en masse instead of individually, as rules require.*

[Topeka council bans discrimination against LGBTQ persons](#) [*The Associated Press*, 16 December 2020]

*The Topeka City Council has voted to expand the city's anti-discrimination ordinance to include LGBTQ residents and military veterans. The council unanimously approved the ordinance Tuesday that prohibits discrimination in work, housing and public accommodations because of gender identity, genetic information, sexual orientation or veteran status. The ordinance also was updated to prevent discrimination through telecommunication, which includes harassment over social media, The [Topeka Capital-Journal reported](#). "Stuff like this still goes on in the workplace, at home, at schools, everywhere," said council member Sylvia Ortiz. "Until we change our hearts and until we change our thinking process ... that is when it'll change."*

## **DIVERSITY**

["Already Behind": Diversifying The Legal Profession Starts Before The LSAT](#) [*Marisa Manzi and Nina Totenberg, NPR*, 22 December 2020]

*A 2015 study by the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that the law was the least racially diverse profession in the country, and it remains among the top. As of 2020, the American Bar Association reported that 86% of all lawyers were non-Hispanic Whites. To put that in context, while African Americans make up 13.4% of the U.S. population, they make up only 5% of all lawyers. And amazingly, that percentage [has not budged in 10 years](#). Applying to law school is expensive. Taking the competitive law school admission test, known as the LSAT, just once costs \$200. The Law School Admissions Council, or LSAC, then charges students an additional \$195 to aggregate application materials and \$45 for each time they apply to a new school. LSAC only waives fees for those who prove they are in "extreme need." While the Internet is full of tips and tricks for applying to law school, a lot of the most useful resources are just out of reach for those who cannot afford them.*

[Two Women Are Currently Attempting Special Warfare Training, Air Force Says](#) [*Oriana Pawlyk, Military.com*, 22 December 2020]

*Since the Defense Department opened combat career fields to women in December 2015, few female airmen have qualified for Air Force special warfare training. Special warfare career fields include special tactics officer, combat rescue officer, combat controller, pararescue, special reconnaissance, Tactical Air Control Party specialist and Tactical Air Control Party Officer, formerly known as air liaison officers. In July, Military.com reported that a single female*

*Special Tactics Officer, or STO, candidate had advanced the farthest in that specialty; she is still on track in her training, according to 1st Lt. Alejandra Fontalvo, spokeswoman for Air Force Special Tactics with the 24th Special Operations Wing at Hurlburt Field, Florida. Additionally, "a new female U.S. Air Force Academy cadet was selected out of our rigorous one-week assessment and selection to enter the two-year STO pipeline following graduation," the spokeswoman said in a statement Tuesday.*

[10 Years After DADT Repeal, LGBTQ Airmen Say More Can Change](#) [Rachel S. Cohen, *Air Force Magazine*, 21 December 2020]

*Ten years after the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy began to phase out, gay and lesbian Airmen say there's more the Department of the Air Force can do to support the LGBTQ community. Several gay and lesbian Airmen who spoke to Air Force Magazine said they have become better wingmen since the fall of DADT, and are optimistic about a military where the LGBT community is better represented and accepted. All have served for more than a decade, including multiple deployments to the Middle East and elsewhere overseas. Some wish the military health care system was better attuned to the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer personnel, ranging from HIV prevention and treatment to pregnancy issues. Mental health care professionals who specialize in LGBTQ issues are hard to find as well, for both Airmen and their families, they said.*

[Air Force graduates its largest class of female test pilots and engineers in history](#) [Jaide Timm-Garcia, *CNN*, 19 December 2020]

*They soar into the desert skies, piloting some of the most sophisticated aircraft the world has ever seen. They have an innate understanding of high-performance aircraft and are always pushing the boundaries on performance. They are the small cadre of flight test pilots who graduate from the U.S. Air Force Test Pilot School (TPS) at Edwards Air Force Base in California—and this year they include a group of five women, a record number. For the five already dominating the skies, it's no big deal and they just wonder why there aren't more females doing it. The school only accepts 45 of the "best and the brightest" pilots and engineers per year—divided into 2 classes—for the rigorous year-long master's degree program. Out of a pool of around 250-300 applicants, usually less than 10% of the applicants are women, Vanhoy said. This year, women made up roughly 20% of the 2020A class.*

[Opportunities for inclusion, new perspectives](#) [Brig. Gen. Charles McDaniel, *USAFE News Service*, 18 December 2020] [COMMENTARY]

*You may not know where or when the next opportunity to make a positive impact in someone's life will present itself, but when it does, be ready. My wife, Deborah, and I have tried to involve our girls in the military experience as much as possible. They grew up around military events like senior noncommissioned officer induction ceremonies, so it was no surprise when our oldest, Helen, decided to join the Air Force Junior Reserve Officer's Training Corps (ROTC) program. Neither was it a surprise when her sister, Marlee, told us she wanted to be like her sister and join as well. You see, Marlee has Down Syndrome and has been looked at, even stared at, for being visibly different. To our surprise, it was the two AFNORTH International School AF JROTC instructors Col. (ret) Raymond Robidoux and SMSgt. (ret) Dennis Parise who approached us and*

*asked if Marlee could join the cadet corps. They explained how it could be an excellent opportunity for the cadets to learn about inclusion, see things from a different perspective and learn how to deal with challenges as a leader.*

[“Diversity” Is Too Shallow for Real Racial Justice](#) [Lawrence Goodman, *Futurity*, 16 December 2020]

*What do Americans, particularly White Americans, mean by the term diversity? For much of the past two decades, associate professor of sociology Sarah Mayorga has worked to find out. For her [book](#), *Behind the White Picket Fence: Power and Privilege in a Multiethnic Neighborhood* (UNC Press, 2014), Mayorga spent 18 months interviewing residents in the supposedly “integrated” neighborhood in Creekridge Park in Durham, North Carolina. She came away with the conclusion that diversity was an ideology that enabled Whites to only superficially commit to achieving social justice. “Diversity ideology dictates that intentions, as opposed to outcomes, are what truly matter,” she writes. It “does not demand that individuals take specific actions to promote inclusion or equity.” In recent articles in [Sociological Perspectives](#) and [American Behavioral Scientist](#), Mayorga has furthered her argument, deconstructing diversity ideology to expose its underlying assumptions and contradictions.*

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

[Erie’s first Black female firefighter reaches another milestone in Pa.: She is now a lieutenant](#) Tim Hahn, *The Erie Times-News*, (Erie, Penn.), 14 December 2020]

*Seenah Mischel was in grade school when she said she saw something one day in her hometown of Buffalo that “just stopped me in my tracks.” It was a Black female firefighter, “someone who looked just like me,” climbing off a fire truck. “I swear, never before in time had I thought I could do something like that,” Mischel said. “Seeing someone doing it was an eye-opener. From that point, I wanted to do it.” Lt. Seenah Mischel, the Erie Bureau of Fire’s first Black female firefighter when she was hired in 2010, in August was named the bureau’s first Black female officer. Mischel, 42, didn’t seek her dream of becoming a firefighter right away. But after college, a stint in the U.S. Army and a move to Erie, she said she decided to go for the job while driving to work one day after hearing a radio announcement about the Erie Bureau of Fire recruiting new firefighter candidates. “They were looking for women and minorities to apply. It was perfect. I signed up right away,” she said.*

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

## HUMAN RELATIONS

[Four Essential Keys to Being a Strong Ally for Racial Justice](#) [Jennifer R. Farmer, *Route Fifty*, 21 December 2020] [COMMENTARY]

*Racial justice activists have long worked to create communities where all are welcome and can thrive. For decades they have worked to obliterate the mindset that people’s race, gender and class determines their value. While there have been moments of triumph and hope, there have also been moments of grave disappointment. There have also been moments of questioning, where we question what we can do to make our communities and our society a better place. Following the police killing of George Floyd that line of questioning moved beyond the communities of color*

*that have traditionally led racial justice campaigns to white Americans asking how they should be supporting Black and brown communities in their struggle to end systemic racism. This support—often referred to as being an ally—has been an important topic in our recent national conversations about racial justice. Yet as much as the term ally has been bandied about, misconceptions abound about how exactly an ally should support marginalized groups. Allow me to set the record straight and discuss the four key actions that allies should commit to do.*

[How to care for your mental health in a difficult holiday season, according to therapists](#) [Isabella Isaacs-Thomas, PBS, 21 December 2020]

*Chances are the final weeks of 2020 look markedly different than what you would've predicted on the first day of this year. With COVID-19 case and death counts on the rise and hospitals continuing to fill up, many are grappling with the ways that the unchecked coronavirus has sabotaged their daily lives, their economic stability and their time-honored traditions at the end of a year where shared celebration and community may feel more important than ever before. More than a million people in the U.S. are also estimated to be facing their first holiday season without a loved one who has died from the disease. Regardless of your circumstances, it's likely that this moment is impacting your mental health in one way or another. In an American Psychological Association poll from late October, 62 percent of adults reported that they felt "more anxious" than they did at the same time last year.*

[RESOURCES]

1. [Anxiety and Depression Society of America](#)
2. [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)
3. [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)

## MISCONDUCT

[Top enlisted soldier at Fort Hood suspended amid investigation into alleged "unprofessional language"](#) [Kyle Rempfer, *Army Times*, 20 December 2020]

*The senior enlisted soldier at Fort Hood, Texas, has been suspended pending an investigation into allegations that he used "unprofessional language toward subordinates recently," according to a brief statement on the matter. Command Sgt. Maj. Arthur "Cliff" Burgoyne was temporarily suspended on Friday by III Corps and Fort Hood commander, Lt. Gen. Pat White. The unprofessional language had nothing to do with race, gender, sexual orientation or sexual harassment, according to an Army official familiar with the situation. The investigation will determine whether the comments were at odds with the service's "people first" policy push, which is intended to foster an environment of dignity and respect, the official added.*

[Chief charged with trying to record female service members in private area in Bahrain](#) [Geoff Ziezulewicz, *Navy Times*, 19 December 2020]

*A U.S. Navy chief faces criminal charges for allegedly attempting to record female service members earlier this year in Bahrain, according to a charge sheet obtained by Navy Times. Chief Boatswain's Mate Douglas R. Lusk, of Maritime Expeditionary Squadron 3, is accused of attempting to record the women in a private area without their consent from March to June at*

*Naval Support Activity Bahrain. Lusk was scheduled for a special court-martial arraignment Thursday in San Diego, according to the Navy Region Southwest docket.*

## **RACISM**

[Kansas City Star apologizes for decades of racist coverage](#) [Tim Stelloh, NBC News, 20 December 2020]

*One of the Midwest's most influential newspapers apologized Sunday for what its top editor described as decades of racist coverage of Kansas City, Missouri. In a [letter to readers](#), Mike Fannin, who has been The Kansas City Star's editor since 2008, wrote that the newspaper "disenfranchised, ignored and scorned generations of Black Kansas Citians. It reinforced Jim Crow laws and redlining." For much of the early history of the newspaper, which was founded in 1880, The Star "robbed an entire community of opportunity, dignity, justice and recognition," Fannin wrote. The publisher of another influential U.S. newspaper, the Los Angeles Times, [acknowledged its own "blind spots"](#) three months ago and said its staff was beginning the process of "acknowledging" its past biases and affirming that its newsroom will not tolerate prejudice. Reporters pored over the newspaper's archives, compared its coverage with that of local Black newspapers and talked to scholars and community leaders for a six-part package examining the paper's past.*

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

## **RELIGION**

[Louis Vuitton yoga mat made of leather draws Hindu complaint](#) [The Associated Press, 22 December 2020]

*A Hindu activist is calling on luxury goods maker Louis Vuitton to pull a yoga mat made partly from cowhide leather, calling it "hugely insensitive." Rajan Zed, president of the Universal Society of Hinduism, said in a statement Tuesday that the mat is "highly inappropriate" to practicing Hindus, who regard cows as sacred symbols of life. "The scenario of yoga—a profound, sacred and ancient discipline introduced and nourished by Hinduism—being performed on a mat made from a killed cow is painful," Zed said. Paris-based Louis Vuitton did not immediately respond Tuesday to messages from The Associated Press seeking comment. The company's yoga mat, made mostly of canvas with leather details and a cowhide carrying strap, retails for \$2,390 online.*

[Mormons add call to eradicate prejudice, racism to handbook](#) [Brady McCombs, The Associated Press, 18 December 2020]

*The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints added new language to the faith's handbook Friday imploring members to root out prejudice and racism, adding significance and permanence to recent comments by top leaders on one of the most sensitive topics in the church's history. The faith's past ban on Black men in the lay priesthood, which stood until 1978, remains a delicate issue for members and non-members alike. The church disavowed the ban in a 2013 essay, saying it was enacted during an era of great racial divide that influenced the church's early teachings, but it never issued a formal apology—a sore spot for some members. In the handbook from the*

*faith widely known as the Mormon church, the new section on prejudice echoes advice in a string of speeches by top leaders this year, reminding 16 million members around the globe that a person's standing with God depends on devotion to the commandments, not the color of their skin.*

## **SEXISM**

[The military designed aircraft with only men in mind. Now they are working to change that.](#) [Tara Copp, *The Miami Herald*, 21 December 2020]

*McClatchy exclusively reported this summer that of the military's 48,000 pilots, only 3,300 were women and only 72 were Black. There are a multitude of reasons, including that the services did not open up flying roles to women until in the 1970s and did not allow women to fly in combat until the 1990s. But even 25 years later, aircraft systems that could make military aviation more accommodating for women and encourage more of them to stay in service are still designed around men. That's starting to change. This summer, due in part to the uproar over the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis police custody, all of the service branches took a deeper look at the lack of race and gender diversity in their ranks. Those internal reviews prompted process reforms, such as who sits on military promotion boards. But it also re-energized reviews of warfighting equipment and a commitment that future military aircraft systems would be designed with both men and women in mind.*

## **SEXUAL ASSAULT/HARASSMENT**

["A huge slap in the face": Frustrations grow over cheerleading's mishandled sexual misconduct cases](#) [Tricia L. Nadolny and Marisa Kwiatkowski, *USA TODAY*, 23 December 2020]

*A USA TODAY investigation found that USASF [U.S. All Star Federation-Cheer & Dance] has an inherently flawed process for investigating complaints—one with critical gaps that have repeatedly allowed adults accused or even convicted of sexual misconduct to remain around children. Sometimes USASF has received hundreds of complaints against individuals accused of misconduct, such as bullying, financial impropriety and sexual abuse. Yet it has had no staff dedicated full-time to managing those cases, according to a former USASF contractor who said she and the organization's membership director were the only ones handling that task from 2019 until she left this fall. Though experts say sexual misconduct accusations should be acted on immediately, USA TODAY found multiple examples in which USASF paused its process for law enforcement to investigate, taking no steps to warn the cheer community or public.*

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[Central Florida women's prison failed to protect inmates from sexual abuse by staff, feds say](#) [Monivette Cordeiro, *The Orlando Sentinel*, 22 December 2020]

*Over and over again during a period of several years, incarcerated women at a Central Florida prison said a lieutenant forced them into sex in exchange for favors or to avoid his wrath, according to the findings of a federal investigation revealed Tuesday. The same lieutenant at Lowell Correctional Institution near Ocala was part of a group of prison guards accused of brutally beating another inmate, Cheryl Weimar, to the point of paralysis in August 2019.*

*Federal investigators said the FDC’s lax handling of Turner was part of a “disturbing” pattern at Lowell, which failed to protect inmates from “systemic” rape and sexual abuse by the facility’s staff, who discouraged them from reporting mistreatment, according to Tuesday’s announcement from the U.S. Department of Justice. The [civil rights probe](#) that began in 2018 determined the Department of Corrections had “documented” a practice of staff sexual abuse at Lowell Correctional Institution near Ocala since at least 2006. Lowell is the largest women’s prison in the country.*

[“I hung up and vomited”— Veteran sexual assault survivors say VA’s outreach retraumatized them](#) [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 18 December 2020]

*An attempt by Veterans Affairs officials this week to improve their outreach to military sexual misconduct victims left several of those victims retraumatized due to what they called an insensitive approach to the issue. The incident—a town hall meeting via telephone in which women were cold-called and transferred into a conversation about sexual abuse with little warning—comes as the VA department’s leadership is embroiled in controversy over their own handling on a sexual assault claim at a VA medical center last year. But Thursday’s event by the Veterans Benefits Administration—part of a series of outreach efforts on services and programs which began earlier this year—appears to undercut those claims. Advocates criticized the approach as poorly thought out and potentially harmful, rather than building positive connections with veterans.*

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

## SUICIDE

[It’s Time for a New, “Heart to Heart” Approach to Help End Veteran Suicide](#) [Karen Guenther, *Military.com*, 21 December 2020] [OPINION]

*As the head of a nonprofit providing lifetime support to service members, suicide is a grim reality that my counterparts and I face every day. Around the holidays, there is an unfortunate uptick in untimely deaths. This will likely be exacerbated by COVID-19—not just for veterans but for civilians as well. A societal pandemic in its own right, suicide is incredibly complex. Certainly, there are a number of successful treatment and prevention programs being implemented, but there is much we still have to learn about mental illness. That is why in this perpetual but urgent battle to save lives, we need to fundamentally rethink how we approach and respond to suicide. It starts with a look inward to an incredibly simple and powerful tool that is too often overlooked—our own hearts.*

[Seeking the Military Suicide Solution Podcast, Episode 44: Dr. Amy Taft, suicide prevention in children of military families](#) [*Military Times*, 17 December 2020]

*Amy Taft is the wife of retired Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer Ward Taft. Together they have two girls and live in Jacksonville, North Carolina. Taft is the founder of [Third Star Foundation](#), an organization that provides ongoing support to children who live in a house with a veteran or service member who has sustained an injury or wound as a result of their time in service. Taft founded the organization after witnessing her own children go through drastic behavior changes after their father returned home from combat with a moderate brain injury. Her goal is to allow*

*children to meet other peers who have a shared experience and give them the tools they need to express their emotions in a healthy way. Taft also wants to bring awareness to child suicide and the devastating effects that isolation has on children.*

[\[LISTEN\]](#)

## **VETERANS**

[Ex-Tuskegee Airman Alfred Thomas Farrar dies at age 99](#) [*The Associated Press*, 21 December 2020]

*Alfred Thomas Farrar, a former Tuskegee Airman, died on Thursday in Virginia only days before a ceremony planned to honor his service in the program that famously trained Black military pilots during World War II. He was 99. Farrar's son, Roy, told The Associated Press on Sunday that his father died at his Lynchburg home. Alfred Farrar would have turned 100 years old on Dec. 26. Farrar left his Lynchburg hometown for Tuskegee, Alabama, after graduating from high school to begin his aviation training in 1941. "It was the next best thing to do," Farrar had [told The News & Advance](#) in a story that ran last week. WFXR-TV reports that the Lynchburg Area Veterans Council plans to honor Farrar and his service during the council's "troop rally" on Christmas Day. "In spite of tremendous discrimination, these young American men and women served their nation with distinction and opened the door of opportunity for many other Americans," the council said in a statement.*