

DEOMI NEWS LINKS 22 JANUARY 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

[Austin confirmed as new Defense Secretary in historic vote](#) [Leo Shane III and Joe Gould, *Military Times*, 22 January 2021]

Former U.S. Central Command leader Lloyd Austin was confirmed Friday as the next Defense Secretary, a historic vote that makes him the nation's first Black chief of the Pentagon. Austin, a four-star Army general who spent more than 40 years in the ranks, was approved by an overwhelming 93-2 vote in the Senate. A day earlier, the House and Senate also approved waiver language to allow Austin, who retired in 2016, to serve in the post despite a law mandating a seven-year gap between military service and the top civilian defense job. During his confirmation hearing on Tuesday, Austin [vowed](#) to prioritize making the military "a working environment free of discrimination, hate and harassment" for all troops and civilians. In recent days, multiple lawmakers hailed Austin not only as a capable leader for the military but also as an important figure to emphasize the need for diversity in the armed forces.

[Biden Order Rescinds Diversity Training Restrictions, Requires Review of Agency Equity](#) [Erich Wagner, *GovExec*, 20 January 2021]

On President Biden's first day in office, he signaled a major shift in the administration's approach to racial issues, signing an [executive order](#) ending the Trump White House's policies that denied the existence of systemic racism in the United States and ordering agencies to "root out" systemic racism and other forms of discrimination both in the workplace and in their public-facing programs. Biden's executive order, one of 15 he signed Wednesday, rescinds the diversity training order in its entirety and launches what the White House called a "whole-of-government initiative to advance racial equity," according to a summary. It directs all federal agencies to conduct an internal review and devise plans to "address unequal barriers to opportunity in agency policies and programs." The review should also ensure equity based on sexual orientation, gender identity, religious minorities and people with disabilities.

[Nearly 1 In 5 Defendants In Capitol Riot Cases Served In The Military](#) [Tom Dreisbach and Meg Anderson, *NPR*, 21 January 2021]

As a violent mob descended on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, lawmakers and aides hid wherever they could, waiting for the military and police to arrive. But many of those who stormed the Capitol were military veterans themselves, who had once sworn to protect the Constitution. In fact, an NPR analysis has found that nearly 1 in 5 people charged over their alleged involvement in the attack on the U.S. Capitol appear to have a military history. NPR compiled a list of individuals facing federal or District of Columbia charges in connection with the events of Jan. 6. Of more than 140 charged so far, a review of military records, social media accounts, court documents and news reports indicate at least 27 of those charged, or nearly 20%, have served or are currently serving in the U.S. military. To put that number in perspective, only about 7% of all American adults are military veterans, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

CULTURE

[Defense secretary nominee, offering scant details, commits to rooting out extremism, sexual assault in the force](#) [Meghann Myers, *Military Times*, 19 January 2021]

As the services grapple with the presence of political extremists—including White nationalists and supremacists, within their ranks—President-elect Joe Biden’s defense secretary nominee, who is Black, shared his own feelings and experiences with extremism during a confirmation hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Tuesday. His testimony came after the National Guard announced that it had sent 12 troops home from inauguration security duty as of Tuesday, including two with possible links to right-wing militias. “We also owe our people a working environment free of discrimination, hate and harassment,” Austin wrote in his prepared remarks. “If confirmed, I will fight hard to stamp out sexual assault, to rid our ranks of racists and extremists, and to create a climate where everyone fit and willing has the opportunity to serve this country with dignity. The job of the Department of Defense is to keep America safe from our enemies. But we can’t do that if some of those enemies lie within our own ranks.”

[“History Has Its Eyes On Us.” Poet Amanda Gorman Seeks Right Words For Inauguration](#) [Jason Breslow, *NPR*, 19 January 2021]

When Amanda Gorman was asked to write a poem for President-elect Joe Biden’s inauguration on Wednesday, she didn’t know where to begin. The nation has just been through a bitter election. Americans are as divided as ever. And the pandemic continues to rage. Gorman is no stranger to having to change her work midstream. Like Biden, who has spoken openly about having stuttered as a child, Gorman has had to overcome a childhood speech impediment of her own. She had difficulty saying certain letters of the alphabet—the letter R was especially tough—which caused her to have to constantly “self-edit and self-police.” “I’d want to say ‘girls can change the world,’ but I cannot say so many letters in that statement, so I’d say things like ‘young women can shape the globe.’” When she steps to the microphone on Wednesday, Gorman will become the youngest person in recent memory to deliver a poem at a presidential inauguration.

[Mississippi county to put up marker for lynching victims](#) [The Associated Press, 19 January 2021]

A Mississippi county will put up a marker to remember Black men who were lynched by White mobs between 1885 and 1935. It will be near a statue that honors Confederate soldiers. Lafayette County supervisors voted unanimously Tuesday to approve the memorial for seven Black men known to have been lynched in the county during the 50-year span. The vote originally was scheduled for December, but it was delayed because one supervisor, David Rikard, said he did not want to memorialize a man who was accused of killing a White woman in 1908. News outlets reported that Rikard met with a committee that planned the marker, and they agreed that the marker would say Lawson Patton was “accused in the murder of a White woman.” The original proposal was to say the man was “accused in the death of a White woman.” The metal sign will go outside the county courthouse on the Square in Oxford, near a marble statue of a Confederate soldier that was put up in 1907.

[New museum in Nashville tells history of American music “through an African American prism”](#) [CBS News, 18 January 2021]

The queen of hip-hop, Missy Elliott; the prince of soul, Marvin Gaye; and the first lady of song, Ella Fitzgerald, have all influenced artists across genres for decades. Now, their careers are on display at the new National Museum of African American Music in downtown Nashville. The museum, which opens Monday, “walks through the history of American music ... told through an African American prism,” president and CEO H. Beecher Hicks told “CBS This Morning” co-host Anthony Mason. “Everything from slave songs to hip-hop and everything in between,” Hicks said. “And so, really all of that is American music, and that’s what we celebrate in the museum.” That theme is woven through the museum’s seven galleries, including One Nation Under a Groove that documents the emergence of rhythm and blues after World War II amid the Civil Rights Movement.

[Sarah Thomas to make history as first woman to officiate Super Bowl](#) [Ben Pickman, *Sports Illustrated*, 19 January 2021]

NFL referee Sarah Thomas will be the first woman to officiate a Super Bowl on Feb. 7, 2021. The NFL announced its officiating assignments for Super Bowl LV on Tuesday and named Thomas as the game’s down judge. Carl Cheffers will referee the game and will be joined by umpire Fred Bryan, line judge Rusty Baynes, field judge James Coleman, side judge Eugene Hall, back judge Din Paganelli and Thomas. Mike Wimmer will be the game’s replay official. “Sarah Thomas has made history again as the first female Super Bowl official,” NFL executive vice president Troy Vincent said in a statement. “Her elite performance and commitment to excellence has earned her the right to officiate the Super Bowl. Congratulations to Sarah on this well-deserved honor.”

[“This is a game-changer”—Air Force to allow longer braids, ponytails, bangs for women](#) [David Roza, *Task & Purpose*, 21 January 2021]

Women across the Air Force and Space Force rejoiced on Thursday to the news that the service will allow them to wear their hair longer than before, thereby loosening constraints that many airmen said had resulted in migraines, hair damage, and hair loss. The new grooming standards allow Air Force and Space Force women to wear their hair in up to two braids or a single ponytail with bulk not exceeding the width of the head and length not extending below a horizontal line running between the top of each sleeve inseam at the underarm through the shoulder blades, according to a press release. In addition, women’s bangs may now touch their eyebrows, but not cover their eyes. The branch’s top enlisted airman, Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force JoAnne Bass, said the changes reflect the diversity of the force.

[“Your Land”? Some Native Americans question inaugural song](#) [Felicia Fonseca, *The Associated Press*, 22 January 2021]

On the first day of Joe Biden’s presidency, Native Americans had reason to celebrate. Biden halted construction of the border wall that threatened to physically separate Indigenous people living on both sides. He also revoked a permit for the Keystone XL oil pipeline that tribes fought in court for years, and he agreed to restore the boundaries of the first national monument created specifically at the request of tribes in southern Utah. Inaugural events showcased tribes across the country in traditional regalia, dancing and in prayer. But amid the revelry, some Native

Americans saw a glitch in Wednesday's swearing-in ceremony. The only mention of Indigenous people came in the benediction delivered by the Rev. Silvester Beaman. And then there was the mishmash of songs sung by Jennifer Lopez that included lyrics from "This Land is Your Land." The folk tune is popular around campfires and in grade schools, but it also called to mind the nation's long history of land disputes involving tribes.

DISCRIMINATION

[Biden Pentagon pick supports lifting transgender military ban](#) [Rebecca Kheel, *The Hill*, 19 January 2021]

Ret. Gen. Lloyd Austin, President-elect Joe Biden's nominee to lead the Pentagon, said Tuesday he supports overturning the Trump administration's ban on most transgender military service. "I support the president's plan to overturn the ban," Austin told the Senate Armed Services Committee at his confirmation hearing Tuesday. "I truly believe, senator, as I said in my opening statement, that if you are fit and you're qualified to serve and you can maintain the standards, you should be allowed to serve. That Biden's nominee supports his plan to overturn a controversial Trump administration policy is not surprising, but the unequivocal answer will reassure advocates who have been pushing Biden to quickly reverse the policy.

[Exclusive: Senator Gillibrand eyes extending Civil Rights Act protections to U.S. troops](#) [Phil Stewart, *Reuters*, 18 January 2021]

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand says she will work with colleagues on legislation giving U.S. troops the same legal protections against discrimination as civilian employees, a move advocates say could be a game-changer for minorities in America's armed forces. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 bars employers from discriminating against employees on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex or religion. But the U.S. government has long maintained that military servicemembers are outside the scope of Title VII because they are not technically federal employees, a view upheld by courts. Instead, troops have a separate system to file complaints of discrimination. Any move to extend Title VII guarantees to troops could potentially also benefit women, lesbian, gay and transgender servicemembers who suffer gender discrimination.

[North Carolina city OKs ban on hairstyle discrimination](#) [*The Associated Press*, 20 January 2021]

A city council in North Carolina has unanimously passed an ordinance that aims to protect workers from discrimination against hairstyles such as braids, dreadlocks or afros. The Durham City Council on Tuesday voted to ban employers from discriminating based on hairstyles, WRAL-TV reported. It's an issue that Black people, especially women, say they've faced in their careers. "It is absolutely a form of racial discrimination," said Durham County District Attorney Satana Deberry, who helped push for the legal protections. Early in her career, Deberry said, a court clerk pulled her aside and suggested she reconsider her short afro. "There's probably a very, very small percentage of Black women who can tell you that they haven't felt some form of discrimination based on how they've chosen to wear their hair," Deberry said. "Your grooming is talked about when you go out on interviews."

[Police diversity chief requests transfer in racial slur spat](#) [*The Associated Press*, 14 January 2021]

The head of a St. Louis County police diversity unit has been admonished for speaking to the media about a county dispatcher who used a racial slur over a police radio, and he plans to resign the post, a union leader said. On Sunday, Lt. Keith Wildhaber told KSDK-TV that department leadership needed to take “immediate decisive action” in response to the slur. “We cannot continue to deny there is systemic racism and discrimination in our department. It’s time to dismantle it,” Wildhaber told the television station. The dispatcher has been relieved of their duties while an investigation is conducted. Wildhaber was called to a Human Resources meeting on Monday during which he was “verbally admonished” for his comments, Joe Patterson, executive director of the St. Louis County Police Association, said in an email Wednesday to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Chief Mary Barton ordered him to stop talking to the media. Wildhaber, who was named to lead the Diversity and Inclusion Unit in 2019, immediately requested a transfer, Patterson said.

[The Stories of Those Who Lost Decades in the Closet](#) [Alisha Haridasani Gupta, *The New York Times*, 19 January 2021]

On a quiet block in downtown Brooklyn, a new photography exhibit—housed inside a senior living center—invites viewers to consider an essential question: How do we measure the emotional and social costs of discrimination? The exhibit, [“Not Another Second.”](#) shot in 2019 by a German photographer, Karsten Thormaehlen, profiles 12 older adults who identify as L.G.B.T.+ (the “Q” is deliberately missing because the word “queer” was often used as a pejorative term against the people profiled), through a series of portraits and video interviews. Almost all of them spent several years of their lives hiding from prejudiced eyes, even to do the most normal of things—to walk with heads held high, to live without being considered crazy, to serve in the military, to marry their lovers, to hold down jobs.

DIVERSITY

[Biden announces Rachel Levine as pick for assistant secretary at HHS, would be first transgender Senate-confirmed federal official](#) [Chandelis Duster, CNN, 19 January 2021]

President-elect Joe Biden has nominated Dr. Rachel Levine to serve as assistant health secretary, and she would make history as the first out, transgender federal official to be confirmed by the United States Senate, according to a statement Tuesday. Levine is currently the Pennsylvania health secretary and a pediatrics and psychiatry professor at Penn State College of Medicine. She served as the state’s physician general in 2015 and assistant health secretary in 2017. “Dr. Rachel Levine will bring the steady leadership and essential expertise we need to get people through this pandemic—no matter their zip code, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability—and meet the public health needs of our country in this critical moment and beyond,” Biden said in a statement. “She is a historic and deeply qualified choice to help lead our administration’s health efforts.”

[Biden will form a council dedicated to policy that affects women and girls](#) [Mariel Padilla, *The 19th*, 19 January 2021]

One day before his inauguration, President-elect Joe Biden announced the creation of the White House Gender Policy Council to focus on “uplifting the rights of girls and women” and restoring

the country as a “champion for women and girls,” according to a [press release](#). “Too many women are struggling to make ends meet and support their families, and too many are lying awake at night worried about their children’s economic future,” Biden said in a statement. “This was true before the COVID-19 pandemic, but the current global public health crisis has made these burdens infinitely heavier for women all over this country.” Jennifer Klein, the chief strategy and policy officer at TIME’S UP—a movement against sexual harassment founded in 2018—and Julissa Reynoso, the incoming assistant to the president and chief of staff to Dr. Jill Biden, were chosen to co-chair the council. In cooperation with other White House policy councils, Klein and Reynoso will work to guide and coordinate policy that impacts women and girls, including economic security, health care, racial justice, gender-based violence and foreign policy issues.

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

[California grappling with diversity in ethnic studies for high schools](#) [Pamela Manson, *United Press International*, 22 January 2021]

The California Department of Education is finalizing a model ethnic studies curriculum designed to teach students in public high schools about the history, culture and contributions to American society of historically marginalized people. Developing the model has taken five years, with two previous drafts criticized in thousands of comments from groups ranging from Sikhs to Korean Americans saying they were underrepresented or mischaracterized. Public comments on the third and [final draft](#) closed Thursday, with some groups still unhappy. Satisfying every group has proved to be daunting. The draft curriculum focuses on four foundational disciplines: African American, Chicano and Latinx, Native American and Asian American ethnic studies. An appendix contains lesson plans and other resources for many more ethnicities.

[For the 1st time, Norfolk Naval Shipyard’s new commanding officer is a woman](#) [Dave Rees, *The Daily Press*, (Norfolk, Va.), 15 January 2021]

The officer who led Norfolk Naval Shipyard’s planning and execution of nuclear vessel overhauls is back after two years away, as the first female commanding officer of the Navy’s oldest shipyard. Capt. Dianna Wolfson took command of the yard, with its nearly 11,000 employees, on Friday. Her priorities include implementing a new strategic framework to improve performance of the shipyard’s leadership, its organizational culture, employee development and the way it does its job. “I believe in the mantra that ‘if you take care of your people, they’ll take care of you,’” she said. “I think the people piece of the business is so important because it’s the people who do the work. It’s the people who make change. It’s the people who drive results.”

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

[Marine veteran is now second double-amputee police officer in the country](#) [Harm Venhuizen, *Military Times*, 21 January 2021]

A Marine veteran is now the second double-amputee police officer in the United States after graduating from the Fort Worth Police Academy on Dec. 11, 2020. The now 35-year-old Fort Worth native had enlisted right after graduating high school in 2005, and deployed twice to Iraq. On his second tour in November 2007, Cpl. Briseno was riding in a Humvee in Fallujah when an IED detonated directly beneath his seat, blowing off his legs. Zach Briseno always had intended

to become a police officer. Now a father of four, Briseno and his family live in a house built by veterans nonprofit [Helping a Hero](#) in 2011 to accommodate his needs.

[Tampa military base ramps up talk and action about diversity and inclusion](#) [Ileana Najarro, *The Tampa Bay Times*, 21 January 2021]

Leaders at MacDill Air Force Base are reaching out to Tampa Bay schools to expose students in minority communities to Air Force aviation careers. The base also is hosting panels with community leaders to discuss diversity and inclusion, expanding on similar conversations happening within units on base. These are some of the efforts underway at the Tampa military base as it seeks to address racial disparities and related issues, despite an executive order in September by then-President Donald Trump, which limited formal diversity training. Efforts at the local and Air Force level to address problems such as racial stereotypes have grown since the killing of George Floyd last May in Minneapolis. “What we’ve said and what I firmly believe is that diversity, inclusion, valuing diversity and inclusion on our teams, it’s a mission imperative,” said Col. Benjamin Jonsson, commander of the 6th Air Refueling Wing and de facto mayor of MacDill at a virtual town hall on Jan. 7.

MISCELLANEOUS

[Among many tasks, newly sworn-in President Biden asked to overhaul the citizenship process for military veterans](#) [Meghann Myers, *Military Times*, 20 January 2021]

As Biden’s inauguration ceremony got underway, Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., sent his office a letter pleading for him to take a look at the path to citizenship for service members, veterans and their dependents, the twists and turns of which have ended in deportation for some in recent years, though legislation meant to expedite the pathway to citizenship while serving is on the books. “Yet, despite these efforts, many servicemembers are deploying without their citizenship,” Duckworth wrote in the letter. “Some have no valid immigration status as they fight overseas, and fear that they will be detained and deported when they return. Some honorably serve and fight in combat overseas only to be discharged without receiving citizenship.”

[Anonymous \\$40 million gift funding 50 civil rights lawyers](#) [Michael Warren, *The Associated Press*, 18 January 2021]

The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund launched a \$40 million scholarship program on Monday to support a new generation of civil rights lawyers, dedicated to pursuing racial justice across the South. With that whopping gift from a single anonymous donor, the fund plans to put 50 students through law schools around the country. In return, they must commit to eight years of racial justice work in the South, starting with a two-year post-graduate fellowship in a civil rights organization. “The donor came to us,” said Sherrilyn Ifill, president of the Legal Defense and Educational Fund. “The donor very much wanted to support the development of civil rights lawyers in the South. And we have a little bit of experience with that.” Indeed, the LDF has been backing civil rights lawyers ever since its founding by Thurgood Marshall in 1940, during an era when Black people rarely had effective legal representation and Black students were turned away from southern universities.

MISCONDUCT

[12 Guard members removed from Biden inauguration](#) [James Laporta and Michael Balsamo, *The Associated Press*, 19 January 2021]

Twelve U.S. Army National Guard members have been removed from the presidential inauguration security mission after they were found to have ties with right-wing militia groups or posted extremist views online, according to two U.S. officials. There was no threat to President-elect Joe Biden, they said. The officials, a senior intelligence official and an Army official briefed on the matter, did not say which fringe group the Guard members belonged to or what unit they served in. The officials were not authorized to speak publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity. Their removal from the massive security presence at the nation's capital comes as the FBI worked to vet all of the 25,000 National Guard troops headed to the area for Biden's inauguration Wednesday. U.S. defense officials have been worried about a potential insider attack or other threat from service members following the deadly riot at the U.S. Capitol Jan. 6 by Trump supporters that shocked the nation.

[Army Reserve sergeant and AWOL soldier who joined YPG arrested amid Capitol riot fallout](#) [Kyle Rempfer, *Army Times*, 18 January 2021]

An Army Reserve sergeant described in charging documents as “an avowed White supremacist” was arrested Sunday in New Jersey for taking part in the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol by supporters of President Donald Trump. Further south in Florida, and further left on the political spectrum, a former soldier who fought with the YPG in Syria was arrested Friday for allegedly threatening Trump supporters ahead of upcoming protests in Tallahassee. “The Army does not tolerate racism, extremism, or hatred in our ranks and is committed to working closely with the FBI as they identify people who participated in the violent attack on the Capitol to determine if the individuals have any connection to the Army,” said Master Sgt. Michel Sauret, an Army Reserve Command spokesman.

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[Episode 2: Dealing with extremism in the military](#) [Military Matters Podcast, *Stars and Stripes*, 21 January 2021]

Last month, then-acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller quietly ordered a review of the Pentagon's policies on extremist activities among service members. This week's episode of Military Matters examines this issue, an old problem that hasn't gone away. Military Matters co-host Jack Murphy talks with former neo-Nazi Shannon Foley Martinez about how she got involved in the White power movement as a teen, how she got out and how extremism can be a magnet for service members.

[Operation High Tide: Inside the Navy's effort to sting sex-trafficking sailors in Bahrain](#) [Geoff Ziezulewicz, *Navy Times*, 20 January 2021]

Judging by his text messages, then-Quartermaster 3rd Class Kenneth Olaya had taken to the darker side of Navy life in Bahrain by December 2017. He had arrived in country for a “hot fill” assignment on the patrol ship Typhoon in February of that year. The Thai women were everywhere, just waiting to be bought. “You go to clubs ... you see those prostitutes, right there in

the club in the corner, talking to people,” he later said at his court-martial. “It seemed normal.” Olaya would later become one of at least 15 Navy members—including several officers and chiefs—charged or disciplined in connection to a rash of sex crimes against Thai women in Bahrain in 2017. The Navy has slowly released court records in connection to the cases in response to Navy Times’ Freedom of Information Act requests, with Olaya’s file being the latest to be made public, further rounding out understanding of what went down on the tiny Middle Eastern island.

[U.S. soldier arrested in plot to blow up NYC 9/11 Memorial](#) [Larry Neumeister, *The Associated Press*, 19 January 2021]

A U.S. Army soldier was arrested Tuesday in Georgia on terrorism charges after he spoke online about plots to blow up New York City’s 9/11 Memorial and other landmarks and attack U.S. soldiers in the Middle East, authorities said Tuesday. Cole James Bridges of Stow, Ohio, was in custody on charges of attempted material support of a terrorist organization—the Islamic State group—and attempted murder of a military member, said Nicholas Biase, a spokesperson for Manhattan federal prosecutors. The 20-year-old soldier, also known as Cole Gonzales, was with the Third Infantry Division out of Fort Stewart, Georgia, when he thought he was communicating with the Islamic State online about the terrorism plots, Biase said.

RACISM

[New data shows hopeful, worrying portrait of race in America.](#) [Harry Olsen, *The Washington Post*, 18 January 2021] [OPINION]

Monday is the day America celebrates the life of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. It’s fitting, therefore, to use the occasion to think about race in today’s America. The latest data from the Democracy Fund paints both a hopeful and sobering picture. The most frightening data involves perceptions of racial discrimination today. More than 56 years since the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, more than 80 percent of Black Americans still believe they face either a great deal or a lot of discrimination because of their race. The nation as a whole is split on this question; 50 percent of Americans say Black people face a great deal or a lot of racial discrimination and 50 percent believe they face a moderate amount, a little, or none at all. The parties are sharply divided over this question too, with about 80 percent of Democrats and Democrat-leaning independents in the first camp and about the same proportion of Republicans and GOP-leaning independents in the second camp. This sharp divergence in perceptions is one of the driving forces in politics today.

[Satellite Beach residents find anti-Semitic tracts about Antifa, BLM near synagogue](#) [J.D. Gallop, *Florida Today*, 19 January 2021]

Some Satellite Beach residents living near a synagogue reported finding anti-Semitic flyers tucked into plastic bags that were tossed onto the driveways of several homes. The flyer claimed that Antifa, an anti-fascist group involved in demonstrations and riots in 2020, is part of a “Jewish communist militia,” operating with the Black Lives Matter organization. The fliers were also found early Sunday in the yard of a home where a state Democratic Party chairman was

staying. “I was shocked to find the messages about the hate,” said Sanjay Patel, staying with a relative on the street when the latest discovery was made Sunday.

SEXUAL ASSAULT/HARASSMENT

[Fort Bliss soldier charged with rape of fellow unit member a year before her death New Year’s Eve](#) [Kyle Remfer, *Army Times*, 15 January 2021]

A 1st Armored Division soldier at Fort Bliss, Texas, has been formally accused of three sexual assaults in the past year, including the alleged 2019 rape of a soldier from his unit who was found dead this New Year’s Eve. Pfc. Christian G. Alvarado was arraigned Thursday during a general court-martial at Fort Bliss on three specifications of sexual assault, two specifications of making false statements and one specification of aggravated assault in violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Alvarado is accused of raping 19-year-old Pfc. Asia M. Graham while she was unconscious Dec. 30, 2019, at Fort Bliss, according to his charge sheets. Graham was found dead in her barracks room this New Year’s Eve, roughly one year after the alleged assault took place.

SUICIDE

[Alaska Bases Limit Alcohol Sale Hours to Curb Drinking-Related Suicides](#) [Matthew Cox and Oriana Pawlyk, *Military.com*, 15 January 2021]

U.S. military commanders in Alaska have ordered alcohol sales to cease after 10 p.m. on two bases in an effort to control drinking-related mental health issues such as suicide. As of Friday, “alcohol may not be purchased between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. on the installation,” according to a post Thursday on the Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, or JBER, Facebook page. “Several scientific studies reviewed by the National Institutes of Health have concluded that restricting the hours when alcohol may be sold is an effective strategy for reducing excessive alcohol consumption and related harms,” according to the post. The Army has wrestled with morale issues unique to Alaska. A military behavioral health team conducted a review in 2019 that looked at 11 suicides at Wainwright between January 2014 and March 2019 but failed to pinpoint definitive reasons behind them.

VETERANS

[Army vet, Capitol officer who held off mob escorts Harris at inauguration](#) [James Clark, *Task & Purpose*, 20 January 2021]

The former Army infantryman and Capitol Police officer who drew national acclaim after he was filmed standing up to rioters at the U.S. Capitol served as an escort to Vice President Kamala Harris during the Presidential Inauguration in Washington, D.C. on Wednesday. Eugene Goodman was promoted to acting deputy Senate sergeant at arms, multiple news outlets reported, following the events at the nation’s capital earlier this month. Video footage of the encounter demonstrated Goodman’s calm and cool demeanor under pressure, and has helped fuel a campaign to see him awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

[Female Veterans with PTSD at Higher Risk of Heart Disease](#) [Lindsey Carr, *Psychiatric Times*, 21 January 2021]

Female veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), especially younger women who are non-White, have an increased risk of developing heart disease. Findings such as these were presented Friday, November 13, through Tuesday, November 17, at the [American Heart Association's Scientific Sessions 2020](#). The presenter was Ramin Ebrahimi, MD, professor of medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles. According to Ebrahimi, they found that women with PTSD had a 44% higher risk of developing ischemic heart disease compared to those without PTSD, and the increased risk was more prominent in younger women, especially those younger than 40 years old (72%). The increased heart disease risk among female veterans with PTSD was also higher in racial and ethnic minorities, including Black women, non-White women from other racial backgrounds and women of Hispanic and Latinx ethnicity, compared with White female veterans.

[Veteran Unlawfully Held in State Hospital for More Than 2 Decades. Are There More Like Him?](#) [Tom Jones and Monica Dean, *NBC San Diego*, 21 January 2021]

For nearly 24 years, Alan Alter, a 71-year-old veteran of the Vietnam War had been unlawfully committed to a California state hospital, according to his attorney. Alan Alter's story is not only about a veteran whose liberties were taken away for more than two decades, or the historical misunderstandings surrounding care for those with severe Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and mental illnesses; but is also about the possibility of other persons out there who are currently being held illegally under the same state program that Alan Alter was in due to a lack of oversight—the Mentally Disordered Offender (MDO) program. The MDO program was created to hold criminal offenders in California state hospitals past their parole dates if the state determines they pose a risk to themselves or society.

[White Army vet charged in December shooting of a Black girl at Iowa Trump rally](#) [Ryan Foley, *The Associated Press*, 15 January 2021]

*Michael McKinney, 25, is charged with attempted murder in the Dec. 6 shooting in Des Moines. McKinney, who was heavily armed and wearing body armor, told police he fired the shot in self-defense. A resident of tiny St. Charles, Iowa, McKinney has posted on Facebook in support of the far-right Proud Boys and against Black Lives Matter. In a news release detailing McKinney's arrest, the state police described an afternoon shooting at a parking lot and didn't mention the Trump car rally or the race of those involved. A city police spokesman said initial reports indicated the shooting was traffic-related. But a review by *The Associated Press* shows the shooting was sparked by a belligerent political clash between a large group of White Trump supporters and four unarmed Black girls all aged 16 and under. The teen driver's mother said the girls argued with Trump supporters about politics and were subjected to racial slurs. Rallygoers blamed the teens for starting the confrontation, saying they were harassing and threatening the crowd.*

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