

DEOMI NEWS LINKS 7 JANUARY 2022

HIGHLIGHTS

[Army judge makes extraordinary ruling, raising prosecutors' threshold in sexual assault court-martial](#) [John Vandiver, *Stars and Stripes*, 4 January 2022]

A U.S. Army officer facing sexual assault charges will require a unanimous guilty verdict to be convicted in an upcoming court-martial, a judge ruled this week ahead of a potentially groundbreaking case. Col. Charles Pritchard, an Army judge in Kaiserslautern, Germany, said allowing a non-unanimous guilty verdict in the trial of Lt. Col. Andrew Dial would violate due process by denying him the same rights that civilian defendants enjoy. In a pretrial decision Monday, Pritchard wrote that he will therefore instruct the military panel judging Dial that "any finding of guilty must be by unanimous vote." A factor in Pritchard's decision was an April 2020 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that banned non-unanimous verdicts in state criminal cases. Oregon was the last state to allow split jury verdicts. But the Supreme Court decision made no mention of the applicable standard in military courts. One reason for that is courts have repeatedly found that the Constitution gives Congress power to "make rules for the government and regulation of the land and naval forces."

[Black man behind "separate but equal" ruling is pardoned](#) [Janet McConnaughey, *The Associated Press*, 5 January 2022]

Louisiana's governor on Wednesday posthumously pardoned Homer Plessy, the Black man whose arrest for refusing to leave a Whites-only railroad car in 1892 led to the Supreme Court ruling that cemented "separate but equal" into U.S. law for half a century. The state Board of Pardons in November recommended the pardon for Plessy, who boarded the rail car as a member of a small civil rights group hoping to overturn a state law segregating trains. Instead, the protest led to the 1896 ruling known as Plessy v. Ferguson, which solidified Whites-only spaces in public accommodations such as transportation, hotels and schools for decades. At a ceremony held near the spot near where Plessy was arrested, Gov. John Bel Edwards said he was "beyond grateful" to help restore Plessy's "legacy of the rightness of his cause ... undefiled by the wrongness of his conviction." The Plessy v. Ferguson ruling allowing racial segregation across American life stood as the law of the land until the Supreme Court unanimously overruled it in 1954, in Brown v. the Board of Education.

[Click "Like", Get Punished Under Pentagon's New Anti-Extremism Policy](#) [Tara Copp, *Defense One*, 20 December 2021]

Service members could be punished for "liking" extremist content online under a new extension to the Pentagon's anti-extremism policy that was prompted by the Jan. 6 attacks on the U.S. Capitol. The [new policy, a revision of DOD Instruction 1325.06](#), introduces the department's first rules that specifically govern troops' activities on social media, said a senior defense official who briefed reporters before the report's release. "It basically clarifies exactly that service members are responsible for the content that they publish on all personal and public internet domains, including social media sites, blogs, websites and applications," the official said. Under the new

policy, “liking” extremist content could result in military punishment. The review also recommended updates to a transition assistance program that aims to help people leaving the military stave off recruitment by extremist groups. A [study](#) released last week by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, or START, found that former and some current service members have been involved in 458 crimes tied to extremism since 1990.

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

CULTURE

[American figure skater could become 1st out nonbinary Winter Olympian](#) [Jo Yurcaba, NBC News, 6 January 2022]

American figure skater Timothy LeDuc could make history this week. On Thursday, LeDuc, who uses gender-neutral pronouns, and their partner, Ashley Cain-Gribble, will compete in the U.S. Figure Skating Championships with the hope of securing a spot on Team USA for the 2022 Winter Olympics, in Beijing in February. If they succeed, LeDuc would become the first out nonbinary person to compete in the Winter Games. LeDuc, 31, is no stranger to historic firsts—they were the first openly gay athlete to win gold in a U.S. pairs event in 2019—but making Team USA would be especially meaningful because LeDuc, who is from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, hasn’t always felt welcome in their sport. LeDuc’s journey to finding a supportive figure skating partner and winning gold at the national championships in 2019 hasn’t been an easy one. When they came out to their parents as gay at 18, they said their family was attending a traditional evangelical church, so their reaction was, “We love you, but we need to change you.”

[Confederate monuments will likely go to Black history museum](#) [The Associated Press, 30 December 2021]

Virginia and Richmond officials on Thursday announced a tentative agreement to transfer ownership of the city’s now mostly removed Confederate monuments to the Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia. Included in the transfer would be an enormous statue of Gen. Robert E. Lee that was removed earlier this year, as well as the 40-foot-tall (12-meter-tall) pedestal that held it. Pedestal removal work at the site is still underway. Under the plan announced by Gov. Ralph Northam and Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney, the Black History Museum would work with The Valentine museum of Richmond and the local community to determine the memorials’ fates. The deal requires the City Council’s approval, which Stoney said he would seek next month. The arrangement would enable the community to take a deliberate approach in its reckoning with such divisive symbols, Stoney said in a statement.

[GovExec Daily: Documenting the Jan. 6 Violence](#) [Adam Butler and Ross Gianfortune, Government Executive, 7 January 2022] [PODCAST]

Thursday marked the one-year anniversary of the deadly attack on the U.S. Capitol. Washington held events all week commemorating the event and agencies prepared for any potential security issues. And, as the insurrection fades, one Smithsonian museum is sharing with the public how it’s been documenting the event for history. Courtney Bubl  is a reporter at GovExec. She joined

the podcast to talk about how agencies prepared for the anniversary of the Jan. 6 attack and how the Smithsonian is documenting the legacy of the event.

[“Jeopardy!” champion responds to transphobic Twitter trolls](#) [Francesca Gariano, *NBC News*, 3 January 2022]

“Jeopardy!” contestant Amy Schneider has a few choices words for those directing transphobic comments at her on social media. Schneider, who is the first transgender contestant to qualify for the game show's Tournament of Champions, addressed the commentary sent to her through messages over the course of December in a tweet on the last day of the year. “I’d like to thank all the people who have taken the time, during this busy holiday season, to reach out and explain to me that, actually, I’m a man,” she wrote. “Every single one of you is the first person ever to make that very clever point, which had never once before crossed my mind.” Schneider has remained in headlines in recent weeks due to her long-standing run on the show. By Dec. 1, 2021, the engineering manager from Oakland had won her 10th consecutive game with a total of \$380,200. On December 28, she made history by winning the 21st time in a row and broke the record for most wins by a woman, which was previously set by Julia Collins in 2014. To date, she has had 23 straight victories, earning \$855,600.

[NatGeo Series Asks If the USA Has a Domestic Terror Problem](#) [James Barber, *Military.com*, 5 January 2022]

The National Geographic Channel has found considerable success with its documentary news series “Trafficked with Mariana van Zeller,” now in the middle of its second season. Van Zeller digs into the secrets behind black markets around the globe and encourages her viewers to think of “trafficking” in a broader and more comprehensive way. [“White Supremacy,” the episode premiering Jan. 5, 2022](#), investigates how racist ideology is spread around the globe and what kind of threat it poses to the American way of life. Van Zeller, the academics she interviews and even some of her White supremacist interview subjects don’t hesitate to define the movement as terrorism. Van Zeller ties the idea that less inflammatory language is a new tactic for White supremacist groups to another veteran who turns up in the documentary. Proud Boys leader Joe Biggs is an Army veteran who fought with the 82nd Airborne in Iraq and Afghanistan. Biggs and his group dismiss charges of racism, saying they promote the superiority of Western culture and fight back against “White liberal guilt.”

[Sidney Poitier, trailblazing Hollywood icon who broke barriers for Black actors, dies at 94](#) [Daniel Arkin, *NBC News*, 7 January 2022]

Sidney Poitier, the renowned Hollywood actor, director and activist who commanded the screen, reshaped the culture and paved the way for countless other Black actors with stirring performances in classics such as “In the Heat of the Night” and “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner,” has died, a source close to the family told NBC News on Friday. In a groundbreaking film career that spanned decades, Poitier established himself as one of the finest performers in America. He made history as the first Black man to win an Academy Award for best actor and, at the height of his fame, he became a major box-office draw. He said he felt a responsibility to represent Black excellence at a time when the vast majority of movie stars were White and many Black performers were relegated to subservient or buffoonish roles. He came to be seen as an

elder statesmen in the film industry, celebrated for his social conscience and admired for his regal bearing.

[#VeryAsian hashtag goes viral after racist criticism of Korean American news anchor](#) [Tat Bellamy-Walker, NBC News, 4 January 2022]

The hashtag “Very Asian” has taken off on Twitter after a viewer left a racist voice message for an Asian American news anchor who said that she ate dumplings in celebration of New Year’s Day. Social media users began putting a positive spin on the practice after Michelle Li, who is Korean American and an anchor at NBC affiliate KSDK of St. Louis, shared traditional New Year’s foods. She listed black-eyed peas, pork, greens and cornbread that are believed to bring good luck, adding: “I ate dumplings, too. That’s what a lot of Korean people do.” A viewer complained about the segment that evening, stating that Li was being “very Asian.” “I kind of take offense to that,” the viewer said. “What if one of your White anchors said White people eat this on New Year’s Day. I don’t think it’s appropriate she said that. She’s being very Asian. She can keep her Korean to herself. If a White person said that, they would get fired.”

DISCRIMINATION

[Airbnb’s new experiment to combat rental bias uses initials instead of names](#) [Vanessa Romo, NPR, 4 January 2022]

In an ideal world, sites such as Airbnb would be able to operate without bias or prejudice. They'd provide the same services for all registered users seeking to book a rental, without regard for race. But that appears not to be the case and studies have shown that some hosts do discriminate based on profile photos and African American-sounding names. Now the property rental company is trying an experiment to help solve the problem, changing the way Oregon-based guest profile names appear during the booking process. For the next two years, hosts will see a prospective guest's initials only—not their first name—until the reservation is completed. The move comes nearly 2 1/2 years after Airbnb settled a lawsuit with three African American women who alleged that the site allowed hosts to discriminate against Black users by displaying their full names and photographs, in violation of Oregon’s public accommodation laws.

[Army overturns reprimand for officer who attended BLM protests](#) [Davis Winkie, Military Times, 6 January 2022]

An Army review board has overturned and destroyed a reprimand that a former Colorado Army National Guard lawyer received from his state’s leadership after he wrote an opinion article criticizing his leaders for investigating his participation in a May 2020 Black Lives Matter protest, according to documents obtained by Army Times. Capt. Alan Kennedy, who has since transferred to the Army Reserve, called the ruling a “victory for the First Amendment and the right to protest and write about racism” when reached by Army Times. “The Army’s reversal of [the] unconstitutional reprimand vindicates what we have said since May 30, 2020: there is no military exception to the Constitution.” The lawsuit already resulted in the National Guard Bureau declaring that federal restrictions on protest participation don’t apply to off-duty part-time troops. That has led to concerns about the military’s ability to enforce anti-extremism

measures against off-duty Guardsmen, such as the Wisconsin National Guard soldier who participated in the Jan. 6 insurrection last year.

[Christian wedding photographer who refused service to gay couples loses case](#) [Matt Lavietes, NBC News, 17 December 2021]

A federal court in New York dismissed a lawsuit filed by a Christian wedding photographer who refused to photograph same-sex weddings. The woman, Emilee Carpenter, filed the federal lawsuit in April, arguing that New York's nondiscrimination laws forced her to choose between going against her faith by photographing same-sex weddings and paying fines of up to \$100,000. "The crux of Plaintiff's claims is that her photography is the product of her unique artistic style and vision. Thus, an exemption for Plaintiff's unique, non-fungible services would necessarily undermine, not serve, the State's purpose, as it would 'relegate [same-sex couples] to an inferior market' than that enjoyed by the public at large," Geraci ruled. Carpenter sued the state after she was asked to photograph seven same-sex couples, arguing that the laws violated her First and 14th amendment rights.

[LGBT People Would Get Anti-Bias Shield Under Health Insurer Rule](#) [Allie Reed, Bloomberg Law, 28 December 2021]

Health insurers would be prohibited from discriminating against LGBTQ people under a proposed rule aimed at making it easier for consumers to find affordable health-care coverage in 2023. The proposed rule (RIN 0938-AU65), released Tuesday, would add gender identity and sexual orientation back to a list of anti-discrimination protections under Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act. A Trump administration rule in 2020 (RIN 0945-AA11) had removed those two identities from the list. Prohibiting discrimination based on sexuality and gender identity "would increase access to health care, decrease health disparities," the HHS said in a statement. It would also align with the Biden administration's desire that people receive "equal treatment under the law," regardless of their identity. The HHS said in May that it would begin enforcing protections for LGBTQ Americans in health care in a reversal of the Trump-era rule.

[Man free after 37 years due to "sex for lies" false witness](#) [Maryclaire Dale, The Associated Press, 5 January 2022]

A Philadelphia man was freed from prison Tuesday after 37 years in a case marred by detectives who allegedly offered a witness sex and drugs at police headquarters in 1983 in exchange for false testimony. The trial witness was charged with perjury just days after Willie Stokes was convicted of murder in 1984. But Stokes didn't learn about that perjury plea until 2015, decades into a life sentence. Stokes, 61, walked out of a state prison near Philadelphia eager to get a hug from his mother and a corned beef hoagie. His mother was too nervous to come after several earlier disappointments, so he greeted other family members instead. Both detectives who allegedly offered witness Franklin Lee a sex-for-lies deal to help them close a 1980 murder case are now deceased. Lee was in custody on unrelated rape and murder charges at the time, and said he was also promised a light sentence.

DIVERSITY

[At-home Businesses Are Growing. Women and People of Color Benefit the Most](#) [Chabeli Carrazana, *The 19th*, 27 December 2021]

A wave of new rules in cities, counties and states during the pandemic is opening avenues to entrepreneurship by allowing more people to open businesses at home. Women and people of color, who typically face systemic barriers to starting a business and who have been hit hardest by pandemic job losses, stand to gain the most. The option to start a business might have been out of reach for many women and people of color before. A [study](#) by the Small Business Administration found that businesses owned by people of color are more likely to be financially constrained and more likely to have their loan applications denied. Women face similar barriers, with only 2 to 3 percent of venture capital funds going to women entrepreneurs. Lack of institutional wealth or support and existing banking relationships make it difficult for marginalized communities to set up businesses in commercial spaces. Historically, the majority of at-home businesses are owned by women or are equally owned by a man and a woman—89 percent, [according to data](#) from the Institute for Justice, a libertarian group that has been at the forefront of lawsuits to roll back at-home business regulations.

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[First Spanish-language SNCO course at IAAFA fills partner nation need](#) [Vanessa R. Adame, *37th Training Wing Public Affairs*, 7 January 2022]

Enlisted Professional Military Education at the Inter-American Air Forces Academy reached a new level this past training cycle with the addition of the Inter-American Senior Non-Commissioned Officer course. When the course concluded in December, a dozen military students from four partner nations in South and Central America and the United States had successfully completed the course. The addition of the ISNCO course to the academy's catalogue makes IAAFA the only institution in the Air Force to offer all three levels of EPME. This significant accomplishment comes at the request of U.S. Southern Command, U.S. Northern Command and Latin American partner nations for a course to develop senior enlisted leaders. The academy offers professional military education, provides technical training and aircrew courses entirely in Spanish to international military students from 21 Latin American partner nations and to U.S. military members.

[First Woman to Serve as Commanding Officer of USS Constitution in Ship's 224-year History](#) [Petty Officer 2nd Class Grant Grady, *DVIDS*, 4 January 2021]

USS Constitution's first female commanding officer will take command of Old Ironsides during a change-of-command ceremony, scheduled for Friday, Jan. 21, at noon. As the 77th commanding officer of USS Constitution, Farrell will become the first woman to serve as captain in the ship's 224-year history, dating back to 1797. The first female commissioned officer to serve aboard USS Constitution was Lt. Cmdr. Claire V. Bloom, who served as executive officer and led the historic 1997 sail, the first time Old Ironsides sailed under her own power since 1881. The first female crew member was Rosemarie Lanam, an enlisted Sailor, who joined USS Constitution's crew in 1986. Today women comprise more than one third of the 80-person crew. USS Constitution is the world's oldest commissioned warship afloat and played a crucial role in the Barbary Wars and the War of 1812, actively defending sea lanes from 1797 to 1855.

[Preet Chandi is the first woman of color to complete a solo expedition in Antarctica](#) [Rachel Treisman, *NPR*, 4 January 2022]

Preet Chandi has made a habit of pushing herself, tackling increasingly challenging endurance events over the years, from ultramarathons to mountaineering. And fresh off a grueling ski expedition in Antarctica, the 32-year-old has now made history. “Polar Preet” is believed to be the first woman of color to complete an unsupported expedition to the South Pole. The British army officer and physiotherapist, who is of Indian heritage and the Sikh faith, completed the 700-mile trip in just 40 days, according to a Monday blog post. She documented her journey online and on Instagram, posting daily updates with shoutouts to those who supported and inspired her. Only a few female adventures have completed solo, unsupported treks on the continent, starting with Norway’s Liv Arnesen in 1994. Chandi said she wanted to add more names and diversity to that list, in the hopes of inspiring future generations to pursue their goals and push boundaries.

[U.S. LGBTQ+ population hits 20 million](#) [Brooke Migdon, *The Hill*, 14 December 2021]

At least 20 million adults in the U.S. identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, according to a new analysis of government data, representing nearly 8 percent of the nation’s total adult population. Millions more may identify as something “more expansive” like pansexual or asexual, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Foundation said in a [recent report](#). Using [data from the Census Bureau’s Household Pulse Survey](#), an experimental household probability survey released in bi-weekly phases during the pandemic, the HRC report estimates the U.S. adult LGBTQ+ population is [nearly two times larger](#) than previously believed. Census data suggests that more than 2 million adults in America may identify as transgender, [up from an estimated 1.4 million in 2016](#), according to the Williams Institute, a UCLA think tank focused on sexual orientation and gender identity issues.

[USS Abraham Lincoln captain becomes first woman to take a U.S. aircraft carrier to sea](#) [Alex Wilson, *Stars and Stripes*, 4 January 2022]

The USS Abraham Lincoln made history on Monday as it departed San Diego for a scheduled deployment, the first-ever of a U.S. aircraft carrier skippered by a woman. Capt. Amy Bauernschmidt assumed command of the Abraham Lincoln in August. The ship departed with its strike group for a regularly scheduled deployment in support of global maritime security operations, according to a Monday news release from U.S. 3rd Fleet. A Milwaukee native, Bauernschmidt graduated with a bachelor’s in ocean engineering from the Naval Academy in 1994, the first graduating class in which women were allowed to serve aboard combatant ships and aircraft, according to the Navy. She earned a master’s at the Naval War College and was designated a naval aviator in 1996. She has 3,000 flight hours and numerous commendations, according to her Navy biography. She was also the first female executive officer aboard a carrier when she stepped into that role aboard the Abraham Lincoln in August 2016.

EXTREMISM

[“Close the loopholes”: The Pentagon’s next front in its hunt for extremists](#) [Bryan Bender, *Politico*, 4 January 2022]

One year after a few dozen military veterans took part in the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, the Pentagon has responded by tightening regulations to combat extremism in the ranks. But the war has only just begun, according to Defense Department officials, lawmakers and experts on extremist movements. “The past 40 years has basically been a history of some sort of crisis that illustrates extremism in the military and then there’s some sort of patchwork measures taken to try to deal with it,” said Mark Pitcavage, a leading authority on extremism at the Anti-Defamation League. “And then it kind of subsides until the next crisis.” Heidi Urben, a retired Army colonel and specialist on the military and politics at Georgetown University, agreed that the key is “to what extent the services will be able to sustain focus and command emphasis at all levels from this point out.” She noted that the military branches, “particularly the Army, placed a lot of emphasis on countering extremism in the 1990s, and then that attention dissipated.”

[Facebook Hosted Surge of Misinformation and Insurrection Threats in Months Leading Up to Jan. 6 Attack, Records Show](#) [Craig Silverman, *ProPublica*, Craig Timberg, *The Washington Post*, Jeff Kao, *ProPublica*, and Jeremy B. Merrill, *The Washington Post*, 4 January 2022]
[COMMENTARY]

Facebook groups swelled with at least 650,000 posts attacking the legitimacy of Joe Biden’s victory between Election Day and the Jan. 6 siege of the U.S. Capitol, with many calling for executions or other political violence, an investigation by ProPublica and The Washington Post has found. The ProPublica/Post investigation, which analyzed millions of posts between Election Day and Jan. 6 and drew on internal company documents and interviews with former employees, provides the clearest evidence yet that Facebook played a critical role in the spread of false narratives that fomented the violence of Jan. 6. Its efforts to police such content, the investigation also found, were ineffective and started too late to quell the surge of angry, hateful misinformation coursing through Facebook groups—some of it explicitly calling for violent confrontation with government officials, a theme that foreshadowed the storming of the Capitol that day amid clashes that left five people dead.

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INTERNATIONAL

[Ashers “gay cake” case: European court rules case inadmissible](#) [Eimear Flanagan, *BBC News*, 6 January 2022]

A gay rights activist has lost a seven-year discrimination dispute over a cake order as the European Court of Human Rights ruled his case inadmissible. Gareth Lee started legal action back in 2014 after a Christian-run Belfast bakery refused to make him a cake with the slogan “Support Gay Marriage”. The family firm Ashers said the slogan contravened their Christian beliefs. The European court ruled Mr Lee’s case inadmissible, saying he had failed to exhaust all options in the UK courts. The Belfast man has long argued that by refusing to fulfil his order, the bakery had discriminated against him on grounds of his sexual orientation and political beliefs. The long-running dispute has raised questions about religious freedom and discrimination law. The judges decided that in order for a complaint to be admissible, “the Convention arguments must be raised explicitly or in substance before the domestic authorities”. Mr Lee expressed disappointment that his case had been dismissed on a “technicality”.

[Farewell to “our national conscience” at funeral of South Africa’s Tutu](#) [Wendell Roelf, *Reuters*, 1 January 2022]

President Cyril Ramaphosa lauded the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu as “our moral compass and national conscience” as South Africa bade farewell at a state funeral on Saturday to a hero of the struggle against apartheid. The president then handed over the national flag to Tutu’s widow, Nomalizo Leah, known as “Mama Leah”. Tutu, who was awarded the Nobel Peace prize in 1984 for his non-violent opposition to White minority rule, died last Sunday aged 90. Widely revered across South Africa’s racial and cultural divides for his moral integrity, Tutu never stopped fighting for his vision of a “Rainbow Nation” in which all races in post-apartheid South Africa could live in harmony. Hundreds of well-wishers queued on Thursday and Friday to pay their last respects as his body lay in state at the cathedral.

[Māori journalist becomes first person with facial markings to present primetime news](#) [Jeevan Ravindran, *CNN*, 30 December 2021]

A Māori journalist has made history in New Zealand by becoming the first person with traditional facial markings to host a primetime news program on national television. Oriini Kaipara made headlines worldwide after hosting her first 6 p.m. bulletin for Newshub on the TV channel Three, with many lauding the milestone as a win for Māori representation. The 38-year-old is already the permanent anchor of the 4:30 p.m. “Newshub Live” bulletin, and previously made history in 2019 while working at TVNZ, when she became the first person with Māori facial markings to present a mainstream TV news program. In the tradition of the Māori people, who are the indigenous people of what is now New Zealand, facial markings are tattooed on the chin for women and known as moko kauae, while for men they cover most of the face and are known as mataora.

MISCELLANEOUS

[Air Force to Announce Working Group to Study Resilience, Mental Health](#) [Greg Hadley, *Air Force Magazine*, 6 January 2022]

The Air Force is set to announce a new team in the coming weeks to study barriers to resilience and mental health, Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force JoAnne S. Bass said Jan. 6. Speaking during a “Coffee Talk” event streamed on Facebook, Bass said the new group, called the Fortify the Force Initiative Team, or FIT, will fall under the Air Force’s Barrier Analysis Working Group, or BAWG. FIT will be officially unveiled early this year, “probably within the next few weeks,” Bass added. The focus on resilience, not just mental health, is deliberate, added Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr.—leaders’ goal is to address resiliency “in different forms and fashions” before Airmen reach a crisis point.

[Denials, Not Approvals, Greet Troops’ Religious Vax Exemptions](#) [Elizabeth Howe, *Defense One*, 23 December 2021]

The Air Force has rebuffed roughly 20 percent of the airmen who requested a religious exemption to the Pentagon’s COVID vaccine requirement, officials said Thursday. More than 10,000 Air Force and Space Force troops applied for a religious exemption, far more than any other service. Officials have denied 2,100 of the applications so far; it is not clear whether the rest will be

approved or denied. In fact, neither the Air Force nor any other service has publicly announced approval of any religious exemptions. “Each request is individually reviewed by Religious Resolution Teams at the wing, garrison, major command and field command levels, which are made up of chaplains, medical providers, judge advocates, and other subject matter experts,” the Air Force’s Dec. 22 memo reads. “Religious Resolution Teams make recommendations on determining the least restrictive means possible to accommodate a sincerely held belief without putting mission accomplishment at risk.”

[Oldest U.S. World War II veteran dies at 112 in New Orleans](#) [Krintine Froeba, *Military Times*, 5 January 2022]

*Lawrence Brooks, the United States’ oldest living World War II veteran, died Wednesday morning, according to his daughter and caregiver, Vanessa Brooks. The Black Army veteran served at a time of segregation in U.S. history, where White and Black soldiers slept in separate tents and ate separately. The supercentenarian was drafted and entered the Army in 1940, serving in both Louisiana and Texas. Brooks completed his obligatory one-year service, he previously told *Military Times*, was discharged and back at work in New Orleans in November 1941. A few weeks later, after the attack on Pearl Harbor, he returned to the Army. In March 1942, Brooks found himself in New York Harbor heading to war aboard a “huge” converted ocean liner. He recounted that the voyage lasted close to a month amid a zig-zag course dodging submarines. His destination was Queensland, Australia, a key defensive area in the war against Japan. He loved to reminisce about the Australian people’s acceptance of the 9,000 Black soldiers that served there and the lack of Jim Crow laws that he experienced.*

MISCONDUCT

[He was waterboarded at VMI. His tormentors still got into the military](#) [Ian Shapira, *The Washington Post*, 30 December 2021]

The former Virginia Military Institute cadet was scrolling Facebook when he saw a trio of photos that made him seethe. The images showed a graduating VMI student being sworn in as a Marine officer on a December day in 2019 at the school’s historic Memorial Hall. The former cadet knew the freshly commissioned Marine second lieutenant in a way he’d never forget. Just across the street from Memorial Hall, that same student had helped waterboard him and another VMI freshman inside the barracks as part of an unauthorized initiation ritual, according to two lawsuits, a VMI police report and the transcript of a VMI disciplinary hearing. Why, the former cadet wondered, did VMI suspend his tormentor and two other upperclassmen instead of expelling them, allowing them to return to school and graduate? And why was the military commissioning any of them as officers, including two cadets who were in the room and did nothing to stop it?

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[Navy fires captain and executive officer of San Diego-based littoral combat ship Montgomery](#) [Andrew Dyer, *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, 30 December 2021]

The Navy took the unusual step Thursday of relieving both the captain and executive officer of a San Diego-based warship, it said in a statement. Cmdr. Richard Zamberlan, the commanding

officer of the littoral combat ship USS Montgomery, and Cmdr. Phillip Lundberg, were relieved “due to a loss of confidence in their ability to command,” said Lt. Katie Diener, a Navy spokesperson. The loss of confidence is connected to a mishandled sexual harassment complaint on the ship, a San Diego Navy official familiar with the vessel but not authorized to comment publicly told the Union-Tribune Thursday. Cmdr. Nicole Schwegman, a spokesperson for the San Diego-based Naval Surface Force, declined to comment on the harassment complaint. “It would be inappropriate to comment on the investigation at this time,” Schwegman said when reached by phone. “But yes, there is an investigation into the matter.”

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RELIGION

[Christian world marks Epiphany with series of celebrations](#) [Frances D’Emilio and Mehmet Guzel, *The Associated Press*, 6 January 2022]

Christians around the world on Thursday marked Epiphany, known as Three Kings Day for Catholics and the Baptism of Christ for the Orthodox, with a series of celebrations. Pope Francis used a Mass at St. Peter’s Basilica to decry consumerism, parades were held in Spain the night before, and Orthodox believers watched swimmers plunge into icy waters despite the pandemic to retrieve crosses. Francis encouraged people to shake off consumeristic “tyranny” and crises of faith in lives and societies and instead find the courage to work for justice and brotherhood in societies dominated by what he called the “sinister logic of power.” The Catholic feast day of Epiphany recalls the visit of three Magi, or wise men, to the infant Jesus, and their sense of wonder at the encounter. In his homily, Francis urged people to move past the “barriers of habit, beyond banal consumerism, beyond a drab and dreary faith, beyond the fear of becoming involved and serving others and the common good.”

[Teen’s suit says coaches made him eat pizza despite religion](#) [*The Associated Press*, 31 December 2021]

An Ohio high school football player who says coaches forced him to eat a pizza covered with pepperoni grease in violation of his religious beliefs is suing his former district and the ousted coaches. The former Canton McKinley High School athlete and his parents filed a federal civil rights suit this week seeking millions of dollars in damages and alleging violations of his religious freedom and constitutional rights. The athlete says in the lawsuit that coaches were notified he doesn’t eat pork or pork residue as a member of the Hebrew Israelite religious faith, but that they ordered him to eat the pizza as punishment for missing an offseason workout—and indicated his spot on the team was at risk if he didn’t. The coaches say they weren’t aware it violated his religious beliefs, according to a [defamation case](#) they filed previously against the teen’s father, his attorney and school officials.

[“We All Want Peace”: Soldiers Gain Better Understanding of Islam Through Training](#) [Sgt. 1st Class Mary Katzenberger, 3rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command Public Affairs, 7 January 2022]

More than 40 soldiers deployed to Camp Arifjan and Camp Buehring, Kuwait, participated in cultural awareness training in Kuwait City recently. The religious affairs specialists and

chaplains began their day of cultural immersion organized by the Area Support Group Kuwait unit ministry team at the Amricani Cultural Centre. The Amricani Cultural Centre campus got its start in 1912 when it served as the American Mission Hospital. Its facilities now serve as the home of the Dar al Athar al Islamiyyah, a cultural organization that operates several cultural centers in Kuwait and manages a collection of more than 20,000 pieces of rare Islamic art. Khateeb Mohammed Al-Naqwi, the Islamic preacher for the Islamic Affairs and Moral Guidance Center at the Grand Mosque, presented a basic primer on Islam to the soldiers. “Many people fail to understand that Islam is based on two things, and on two things only: the Quran and the Hadith,” said Al-Naqwi. “The Quran is the word of God, the book of instructions, and from the other side, the Hadith, that is the traditions, the sayings or the actions.”

SEXUAL ASSAULT/HARASSMENT

[CID, SHARP, military justice reforms all underway](#) [Blake Winkie, *Military Times*, 30 December 2021]

*How the Army prevents, investigates and prosecutes crimes—especially sexual assaults—will begin to change dramatically in 2022. The service’s Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention program, which was highlighted as structurally flawed in the report by the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee, is undergoing a comprehensive redesign effort. While much of the reform effort is yet to be public, the Army will begin a SHARP “fusion directorate” pilot in March that will synchronize and centralize victim services, investigators and prosecutors to improve victim care. The Army’s top officer, Gen. James McConville, told *Army Times* in October that the fusion directorate is just the beginning. “[What] we’re really trying to do is move over here and get after prevention so we have a lot [fewer] incidences to respond to,” McConville explained. “That’s what we’re trying to get to.”*

[Gender Relations Surveys Now Allow All Troops To Give Input](#) [Katie Lange, *DOD News*, 15 December 2021]

Every year, the Defense Department asks a good portion of its military members to take a survey regarding workplace and gender relations. The results give the DOD its official estimates on the prevalence of sexual assault, sexual harassment and gender discrimination in the military. The survey opened this year on Dec. 9 to about 1 million randomly selected service members—roughly half of the combined active-duty and Reserve force. What’s new this year, though, is that there’s also an abbreviated version that any service member can take. “We suspect a lot of folks have something to say,” said Dr. Rachel Breslin, chief of military gender relations research within the DOD’s Office of People Analytics, which puts out the survey. The results of the survey will come out in the summer of 2022 and will be publicly released to DOD policy offices, military service leadership and Congress. The results—along with those from previous surveys—will be available at [OPA.mil](https://opa.mil).

[Historic court-martial of former Air Force Research Laboratory commander set to start at Wright-Patterson AFB](#) [Thomas Gnau, *Hamilton Journal-News (Hamilton, Ohio)*, 4 January 2022]

The first court-martial of a general officer on a sex assault charge in the history of the Air Force is scheduled to begin Monday at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. Ex-Air Force Research

Laboratory commander Maj. Gen. William Cooley is charged under Article 120, which concerns sexual assault. The two-star general is charged with kissing and touching a woman without her consent in Albuquerque, N.M., in August 2018, according to the Air Force charge. Don Christensen, a former chief prosecutor for the Air Force and the president of the group Protect Our Defenders, told the Dayton Daily News in 2020 that if the Cooley case went to court-martial, he will be the first general officer in Air Force history to face such a proceeding. “An Air Force general has never been court-martialed,” Christensen said at the time. “It’s a big deal that they’re doing this.” “What it tells me is that the investigation has shown that the evidence is really strong, that he committed this offense,” he added.

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

[Marine under investigation after 2-star Army general calls attention to sexual harassment allegations](#) [Jeff Schogol, *Task & Purpose*, 5 January 2022]

A U.S. Army general personally intervened on Saturday after a Marine was recently accused of sexually harassing several women online. When Army Maj. Gen. Johanna Clyborne saw several people on Twitter saying a Marine sent them sexually explicit and inappropriate pictures and messages, she decided to step in and asked for people to contact her if they knew the Marine’s name. It’s not every day that a two-star general gets involved when service members say they are being harassed on social media, but Clyborne said she did not feel that what she did was unusual. She noted that Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael A. Grinston will often ask people to private message him when he sees people talk on social media about problems they are facing. Clyborne said this is the first time that she has used social media to provide a command with information about possible misconduct. She declined to identify the Marine or his unit to avoid the perception that she was influencing any actions his chain of command might take.

[Senators look to stop sex assault in U.S. Merchant Marine](#) [The Associated Press, 27 December 2021]

A bipartisan group of senators from Maine, Mississippi and New York wants to strengthen prevention of sexual assault and harassment in the United States Merchant Marine. The proposal would look to improve prevention, response, investigation and accountability of sexual misconduct in the maritime industry, the senators said. It would also provide new safeguards for midshipmen at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, they said. The proposal would give the U.S. Coast Guard the ability to take away a mariner’s license if they were found to have committed sexual harassment or assault, the senators said. It would also create a sexual assault and harassment database at the Merchant Marine Academy to track reports, senators said.

[Survivors and lawmakers urge Congress to reauthorize Violence Against Women Act years after it expired](#) [Nikole Killion, *CBS News*, 30 December 2021]

A bipartisan group of senators aims to introduce a bill to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act when the Senate reconvenes next year. Signed in 1994, the law established the National Domestic Violence Hotline and covers everything from legal protections for victims and funding for shelters. The law hasn’t been reauthorized since 2013. It needs to be reauthorized every five years, but Congress only approved a short-term extension in 2018, and it expired in 2019. Iowa Senator Joni Ernst, a domestic violence survivor, has been working to reauthorize

VAWA since it expired. In December, Ernst and a bipartisan group of lawmakers, including Senators Dick Durbin, Dianne Feinstein and Lisa Murkowski reached a framework agreement to modernize VAWA. It would strengthen rape prevention and education efforts and expand and authorize programs to ensure access to survivors in rural areas, those who seek culturally specific services and LGBT survivors. It also builds on the 2013 reauthorization by expanding criminal jurisdiction to tribal courts to cover non-Native perpetrators of sexual violence and other offenses.

SUICIDE

[Young troops are taking their own lives at double the rate of their civilian peers. Why?](#) [Daniel Johnson, *Task & Purpose*, 30 December 2021]

U.S. Army Spc. Hunter Stafford was 21 when he was found dead last month in Fairbanks, Alaska. His death is one of 16 suspected suicides this year among personnel stationed in Alaska, a spike that has aroused alarm at the highest levels of the Pentagon. It's tempting to blame the long dark winter in the interior of Alaska, plus the isolation imposed by Covid-19 restrictions this year, for these deaths. But servicemembers across the military die by suicide in disproportionate numbers for their age. The death by suicide rate for young service members in 2020 was well over double the rate for civilians the same age, [according to Department of Defense reports](#) and [data recently released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), and higher than all age demographics in the civilian population. Female and Black service members are also more likely to take their lives than their civilian counterparts. The sad secret is that death by suicide in the military has little to do with warfare, and Stafford and many others in the recent spike had never been deployed.

VETERANS

[Copays for veterans mental health care would be waived under new rule](#) [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 5 January 2022]

Veterans Affairs officials want to drop copay expenses for veterans facing mental health challenges as a way to encourage more individuals to seek help when facing suicidal thoughts. Department leaders on Wednesday published plans in the Federal Register to modify VA's copayment rules, with the goal of reforming the policy in coming months. In a statement, VA Secretary Denis McDonough said the move is part of broader suicide prevention and health care outreach efforts by the department. Officials said the new move "would reduce the financial burden of multiple co-payments associated with both increased outpatient visits as well as more frequent, but limited supply of prescribed medications."

[Six Things Veterans Can Do to Strengthen Our Democracy](#) [William Braniff, Joe Plenzler and Anil Nathan, *Defense One*, 6 January 2022] [COMMENTARY]

As a group, veterans and military families exhibit many characteristics that tend to ward off political extremism: a strong sense of patriotism, higher involvement in civic engagement and volunteering, ties to a broad and diverse community of their fellow veterans, and a venerated status among other citizens. But, as we saw with the disproportionate number of veterans who

participated in the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol, those same characteristics can be exploited by extremist groups and manipulated by mis- and disinformation. Many of us who proudly served our nation in uniform have responded to the attack with efforts to keep domestic extremists and hostile foreign actors from recruiting our fellow veterans to extremism and violence. We are trying to inoculate our communities against disinformation, increase civil literacy and participation, and foster creativity and collaboration in strengthening our nation's vital democratic institutions.