

DEOMI News Highlights

DEOMI News Highlights is a weekly compilation of published items and commentary with a focus on equal opportunity, equal employment opportunity, diversity, culture, and human relations issues. DEOMI News Highlights is also a management tool intended to serve the informational needs of equity professionals and senior DOD officials in the continuing assessment of defense policies, programs, and actions. Further reproduction or redistribution for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions.

Active-Duty Military Suicides at Record Highs in 2018 [Patricia Kime, *Military.com*, 30 January 2019]

- The U.S. military finished 2018 with a troubling, sad statistic: It experienced the highest number of suicides among active-duty personnel in at least six years.
- A total of 321 active-duty members took their lives during the year, including 57 Marines, 68 sailors, 58 airmen, and 138 soldiers.
- The deaths equal the total number of active-duty personnel who died by suicide in 2012, the record since the services began closely tracking the issue in 2001.

[Active-Duty Military Suicides At Record Highs in 2018](#)

House panel takes aim at legal roadblock to military malpractice lawsuits [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 25 January 2019]

- A key House Democrat is targeting legislative fixes to [the Feres Doctrine](#) as a top priority this session, taking aim at the legal precedent critics say [unfairly blocks troops from suing the military](#) for medical malpractice, supervisor negligence, and a host of other on-duty mistakes.
- Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif. and the new chairwoman of the [House Armed Services](#) personnel subcommittee, listed the legal issue among her areas of focus in her first statement in the new leadership role. In her statement, she said the panel's guiding focus will be to tackle "critical issues that impact not only our service members but their families who also bear the burden of sacrifice and commitment to our country."
- Those include potential new rules for response and prosecution of sexual assault cases in the military—a topic for which Speier has been a vocal advocate for years—as well as reviewing rules for transgender enlistment, improving data usage in military recruiting and retention, and monitoring troops' pay and benefits.

[House panel takes aim at legal roadblock to military malpractice lawsuits](#)

Sexual assault, harassment spikes at military academies, strategies fail to stem crisis [Tom Vanden Brook, *USA TODAY*, 31 January 2019]

- Incidents of sexual assault at U.S. military academies spiked nearly 50 percent in the past school year despite years of focus on the problem and declarations of zero tolerance, according to results of a survey by the Pentagon.
- The number of students reporting unwanted sexual contact totaled 747 in the 2017-18 academic year, compared with 507 in 2015-16, according to anonymous surveys of cadets and midshipmen. Unwanted sexual contact ranges from groping to rape.
- About 16 percent of women and 2 percent of men at the premier military colleges reported being sexually assaulted, [Nathan Galbreath, deputy director of the Pentagon's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office] said. The increase in assaults stems from more men and women at the Army's academy at West Point reporting unwanted sexual contact from men and women, and more women reporting at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. Reporting remained stable at the Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland.

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Culture

Artifacts discovery halts some work at Marine base on Guam

The Associated Press, January 28, 2019



Marine Col. Philip J. Zimmerman, right, the officer in charge of Marine Corps Activity in Guam, briefs Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. Joseph Dunford Jr. at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, March 20, 2015. Zimmerman briefed Dunford on a buildup plan for Marines in Guam. (Sgt. Gabriela Garcia/Marine Corps)

HAGATNA, Guam (AP) — Construction work stopped in part of the new U.S. Marine Corps base on Guam after artifacts were discovered.

A contracted archaeologist identified the artifacts last week, finding prehistoric items and items from the late 1800s, the Pacific Daily News [reported](#) .

The military has proposed to careful excavation of the items, which include rock tools and pottery fragments, said Al Borja, environmental director for Marine Corps Activity Guam.

The military has as a duty to curate the items, meaning they will be placed in an approved facility after they are collected and studied, Borja said.

The area where construction was halted represents only a small portion of the overall project, said Kelly Rodriguez, a spokeswoman for Marine Corps Activity Guam. Construction in that area will resume when the archaeological investigation is completed.

The military contracts an archaeologist to monitor construction work and ground disturbance, Borja said.

A cultural repository is currently under construction at the University of Guam. The repository will store the artifacts found as the new base in Dededo is built.

The military will take comments from Guam officials and adjust plans for the artifacts as necessary, Borja said.

“The Department of the Navy respects the rich cultural heritage of Guam and remains committed to the cultural and historical preservation of the island,” Marine Corps Activity Guam said in the statement.

Gen. Stanley McChrystal: 5 takeaways on leadership

By Todd South

Military Times, January 29, 2019



Gen. Stanley McChrystal, second from left, arrives at a forward location with Lt. Col. Frank Jenio, second from right, in October 2009 near Kandahar, Afghanistan. McChrystal was commander of the International Security Assistance Force at the time. (Paula Bronstein/Getty Images)

Retired [Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal](#), a former commander of the International Security Assistance Force in [Afghanistan](#), has a new book out about what makes a leader, and what doesn't.

He and his co-authors profile a wide range of leaders in his third book, "[Leaders: Myth and Reality](#)."

"Leadership isn't what we think it is, in fact it never was. But it still matters," said McChrystal, who served nearly four decades in the Army. He started his career as a West Point graduate in 1976, becoming a weapons platoon leader with the 82nd Airborne Division before passing Special Forces selection, later commanding the 75th Ranger Regiment. He headed Joint Special Operations Command during the height of the Iraq War.

He later was selected to lead ISAF in Afghanistan, a position from which he resigned and then retired from the Army following a critical Rolling Stone magazine article that revealed comments by his staff deriding President Barack Obama and key figures in the administration. Following retirement, McChrystal first headed an advisory board on military family support.

He subsequently has taught leadership courses at Yale University, joined the boards of various private companies and nonprofits and authored three books.

He spoke about the new book recently at the headquarters of the Association of the U.S. Army in Arlington, Virginia.

The following are excerpts from his talk, edited for clarity:

1. An unappealing but effective leader

McChrystal and his co-authors, Jeff Eggers and Jason Mangone, sifted through centuries of examples of leaders before landing on 13 leaders to profile from a wide variety of backgrounds, the majority non-military. But one that easily caught the attention of the audience and likely close readers of McChrystal was one of his own rivals – Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the acknowledged founder of [al-Qaida in Iraq](#) and inspiration for the founders of Islamic State.

The four-star notes that while Zarqawi came from poverty, lacked a formal education and spent his early life as a petty criminal, he found his calling in prison and used his innate talents to obtain power and influence over those around him. McChrystal said that Zarqawi traveled Iraq despite the price on his head to guide and serve as an example to the fledgling terrorist organization. "It shows he's willing to do whatever it takes, be whatever is required."

McChrystal led the special operations forces who hunted down and killed Zarqawi in 2006. He personally went to the bomb site to identify Zarqawi's body.

<https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/01/29/gen-stanley-mcchrystal-5-takeaways-on-leadership/>

“I wasn’t sad that he was dead but the reality was, even at that point, I had a pretty healthy respect for that guy. I could completely disagree with his cause and his methods but I had to admire his commitment, his skill, his effectiveness. He was willing to die for his cause.”

Though, McChrystal noted, while effective, Zarqawi’s brand of leadership stemmed from zealotry and was not sustainable. But even in that, he found something to question, to learn.

“We have to ask ourselves, why is it they become entranced, and why can’t they remain, why do they fade away?”

2. A more noble, sustainable way

Another of the book’s profiles turned the lens on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Many remember his famous speeches and marches but he was not always the de facto leader of the Civil Rights movement, the general said.

King was a 26-year-old pastor at a church in Montgomery, Alabama, when he began his leadership role in the movement. He was far younger, less experienced and recognized than many in the movement, even in Montgomery. But his youth, energy and ambition drew people to him.

Even his iconic “I have a dream” speech wasn’t planned or scripted. He was one of a long list of speakers that day in Washington, D.C., and was 11 minutes into a prepared speech that wasn’t keeping the audience engaged. But then, from behind him, singer Mahalia Jackson told him to tell the audience about his “dream.” The dream speech had been delivered in portions to various groups during his lead up to the D.C. event.

And unlike other organizations or movements, King’s effectiveness, McChrystal said, is evident in that the movement continued and succeeded in many areas after his assassination. It didn’t fall apart when the leader was gone.

3. New ways to grow military leaders

McChrystal was quick in response to an audience question about how the Army brings in people with special skills or expertise into the ranks. The key area that’s been proposed in recent years is having [cyber specialists come in at higher ranks](#) so that the services can be competitive with industry in bringing in certain talent areas.

He did emphasize that the military system is good at building leaders. That stems from the inordinate investment in time, energy, funding and manpower that is rarely seen in private industry. But, he said, there are different approaches to add to meet defense needs.

“I actually think the military should be taking people through lateral entry at every rank, they should be bringing in not just specialists in cyber to do a thing,” he said. “We’ve seen people come in pretty senior and be extraordinary warriors back in history.”

“We have a guild system in the military. You can’t be a captain unless you were a lieutenant. We change that in wartime but the reality is our mindset is if you weren’t at the wedding you really shouldn’t be here,” he said. “I think that’s a mistake nowadays. I think we should be taking people in laterally. And that’s very threatening to people that are in the guild.

“But I believe you can take people from the outside and teach them to do most of the military things. I deal in the civilian world. There are some people out there you could but a uniform on tomorrow and they could

<https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/01/29/gen-stanley-mcchrystal-5-takeaways-on-leadership/>

be a general officer and would be hands down effective, right away. And that would be value to the organization because fresh air would come in.”

A challenge is getting that talent to appear credible, he said.

“We could bring in experts, but if we just bring in experts they’re always going to be viewed as not real ... and I actually don’t think that is the best approach,” McChrystal said.

4. The ‘science’ of leadership is incomplete

Despite his military career in leadership roles and the collaborative research he and his co-authors conducted to dig into what makes leadership work, there’s no clear answer, McChrystal said.

And though there are indicators of what makes a leader effective, the needs of the mission, project, movement or organization alter what is needed from a leader.

“We actually don’t know how to tell you to be successful. We can tell you how complex it is. What it comes down to is, I can tell you the things we think that make leaders so effective is having the right values,” he said.

In today’s world, it’s the people who are humble enough and empathetic enough to listen and discern what the situation is, what’s required, and then adapt themselves to that requirement who are going to be the most effective, important leaders of the future.

“I don’t think it’s going to be the person who’s figured out what’s right and then say ‘okay this is the way we do it’,” he said.

5. Leaders are important, but not the most important thing

McChrystal has been critical of President Donald Trump’s conduct but sees that Trump’s rise to the presidency holds lessons not only about leaders but those who look for leaders.

“I think if we look at President Trump, he emerged, he didn’t create the dissatisfaction that caused him to be successful in the election. There were already things brewing in the American political system so he emerged from that situation,” McChrystal said. “I think almost independent of his personality what we need to do is look in the mirror right now. Stop looking at Trump or Rep. Nancy Pelosi ... or Sen. Chuck Schumer ... or somebody else, look in the mirror.

“Decide what we believe is the necessary leadership for our country, decide what we believe our values are and then that’s what we will get because that’s what we will demand. Stop waiting for somebody to tell us what to think. Decide what we think, decide what we believe and live to that.”

Survivors Mark Holocaust Remembrance Day On 74th Anniversary Of Auschwitz Liberation

By Francesca Paris

NPR, January 27, 2019



Holocaust survivors visited the former Auschwitz concentration camp on International Holocaust Remembrance Day. (Bernd Thissen/Picture Alliance via Getty Image)

Former prisoners of Auschwitz gathered at the former Nazi concentration camp on the 74th anniversary of its liberation by Soviet forces.

In the site that once housed the largest Nazi death camp, a group of survivors, politicians and foreign dignitaries marked International Holocaust Remembrance Day in a ceremony Sunday.

"Auschwitz has shown what can happen when the worst qualities in people come to bear," [said Armin Laschet](#), premier of the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia.

Survivors gave testimonies and Poland's chief rabbi [read out the names](#) of all the concentration camps, where many of the 6 million Jews who died in the Holocaust were killed. Over a million people were killed in Auschwitz alone, [most of them Jews](#). Poland's prime minister and the ambassadors of Israel and Russia also attended the ceremony.

"People growing up today must know what people were capable of in the past," German Chancellor Angela Merkel said in her weekly video address [on Saturday](#). "And we must work proactively to ensure that it is never repeated."

President Trump added to the chorus of voices decrying the Holocaust on Sunday.

"To remember these men and women — those who perished and those who survived — is to strive to prevent such suffering from happening again," [he wrote in a statement](#). "Any denial or indifference to the horror of this chapter in the history of humankind diminishes all men and women everywhere and invites repetition of this great evil."

Sunday's ceremony memorialized all those who died at Auschwitz, yet a group of far-right Polish activists gathered there and falsely claimed that the Polish government was remembering only Jews.

This year's anniversary comes amid growing concern among survivors and world leaders alike that the Holocaust has begun to slip from international, collective memory — particularly among younger generations. In remarks both before and on the day of the anniversary, leaders also lamented recent spikes in hate-inspired violence.

According to [a poll released Sunday](#) by The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, five percent of adults in the United Kingdom don't believe the Holocaust happened, and 64 percent either don't know the number of Jews murdered or underestimate that number.

In [a recent op-ed](#) for the newspaper *Die Welt*, Germany's foreign affairs minister, Heiko Maas, wrote that with fewer people directly connected to the past, Germany must continue to teach its young people about the Holocaust.

<https://www.npr.org/2019/01/27/689162207/survivors-mark-holocaust-remembrance-day-on-74th-anniversary-of-auschwitz-libera>



Survivors of Auschwitz at the former concentration camp Sunday. (Czarek Sokolowski/AP)

"Our culture of remembrance is crumbling," Maas wrote. "It is under pressure from extreme right-wingers."

In the United States, [a poll](#) from the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany conducted last year finds four out of 10 people don't know what Auschwitz was. That proportion rises to two-thirds for millennials.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau released a [statement Sunday](#) remembering victims of the Nazis and acknowledging Canada's own history of anti-Semitism.

"The threats of violence, xenophobia, and anti-Semitism still exist today," he wrote. "The murder of eleven Jews at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh ... is fresh in our minds."

Worshippers [were killed last October](#) at the Pittsburgh synagogue when a gunman open fired on congregants. That attack followed a historic 57 percent rise in anti-Semitic incidents in the United States from 2016 to 2017, [according to the Anti-Defamation League](#).

Israel's Ministry of Diaspora Affairs released its Global Antisemitism Report Sunday, saying 13 Jews were murdered in fatal attacks last year, the highest number since a wave of attacks on Argentinian Jews in the 1990s, the [AP reports](#).

SEE ALSO:

[Auschwitz survivors pay homage as world remembers Holocaust](#) [*The Associated Press*, 2019-01-27]

[Ignorance about the Holocaust is growing](#) [*CNN*, 2019-01-27] [OPINION]

[Israeli Holocaust survivor remembers Auschwitz on birthday](#) [*The Associated Press*, 2019-01-27]

Discrimination

Researchers say Amazon face-detection technology shows bias

By Tali Arbel

The Associated Press, January 25, 2019

NEW YORK (AP) — Facial-detection technology that Amazon is marketing to law enforcement often misidentifies women, particularly those with darker skin, according to researchers from MIT and the University of Toronto.

Privacy and civil rights advocates have called on Amazon to [stop marketing its Rekognition service](#) because of worries about discrimination against minorities. Some Amazon investors have also asked the company to stop out of fear that it makes Amazon vulnerable to lawsuits.

The researchers said that in their tests, Amazon's technology labeled darker-skinned women as men 31 percent of the time. Lighter-skinned women were misidentified 7 percent of the time. Darker-skinned men had a 1 percent error rate, while lighter-skinned men had none.

Artificial intelligence can mimic the biases of their human creators as they make their way into everyday life. The new study, released late Thursday, warns of the potential of abuse and threats to privacy and civil liberties from facial-detection technology.

Matt Wood, general manager of artificial intelligence with Amazon's cloud-computing unit, said the study uses a "facial analysis" and not "facial recognition" technology. Wood said facial analysis "can spot faces in videos or images and assign generic attributes such as wearing glasses; recognition is a different technique by which an individual face is matched to faces in videos and images."

In a Friday [post](#) on the Medium website, MIT Media Lab researcher Joy Buolamwini responded that companies should check all systems that analyze human faces for bias.

"If you sell one system that has been shown to have bias on human faces, it is doubtful your other face-based products are also completely bias free," she wrote.

Amazon's reaction shows that it isn't taking the "really grave concerns revealed by this study seriously," said Jacob Snow, an attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union.

Buolamwini and Inioluwa Deborah Raji of the University of Toronto said they studied Amazon's technology because the company has marketed it to law enforcement. Raji's LinkedIn account says she is currently a research mentee for artificial intelligence at Google, which competes with Amazon in offering cloud-computing services.

Buolamwini and Raji say Microsoft and IBM have improved their facial-recognition technology since researchers discovered similar problems in a May 2017 study. Their second study, which included Amazon, was done in August 2018. Their paper will be presented on Monday at an artificial intelligence conference in Honolulu.

Wood said Amazon has updated its technology since the study and done its own analysis with "zero false positive matches."

Amazon's website credits Rekognition for helping the Washington County Sheriff Office in Oregon speed up how long it took to identify suspects from hundreds of thousands of photo records.

Diversity

Black workers had long history with fed jobs before shutdown

By Corey Williams

The Associated Press, January 26, 2019



In this Jan. 10, 2019 file photo Cheryl Monroe, right, a Food and Drug Administration employee, and Bertrice Sanders, a Social Security Administration employee, rally to call for an end to the partial government shutdown in Detroit. The government shutdown left an especially painful toll for African-Americans who make up nearly 20 percent of the federal workforce and historically have been on the low end of the government pay scale. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management says African-Americans make up about 18 percent of the federal workforce of approximately 2.1 million employees. (AP Photo/Paul Sancya, file)

DETROIT (AP) — For Cheryl Monroe and generations of other African-Americans, federal government jobs have long been a path to the middle class and a way to provide a comfortable life for their families.

Then the record-long government shutdown hit, making it hard for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration chemist from Detroit to pay her mortgage.

“People say ‘save for a rainy day’ and you’re always saving, but when there is no check, that’s a hurricane not a rainy day,” Monroe said.

The shutdown that ended Friday left an especially painful toll for African-Americans who make up nearly 20 percent of the federal workforce and historically have been on the low end of the government pay scale.

The federal government played an important role in the building of the black middle class in the United States, giving African-Americans job opportunities that weren’t always available in the private sector. It started during World War II and the post-war years when the need for manpower was great as large numbers of whites were in military-related or war-production jobs.

These jobs offered African-Americans a chance to reach for a “slice of the American dream,” said Frederick Gooding Jr., African-American studies professor at Texas Christian University and author of the recently published “American Dream Deferred: Black Federal Workers in Washington, D.C., 1941-1981.”

“One of the pull factors was a good government job had stable pay, higher pay and benefits in contrast to domestic jobs and tough industrial jobs,” Gooding said. “After the war ended, the federal government really started to take a look at what it should do because many of those black workers were still there.”

Gooding said the federal Office of Price Administration — which helped regulate the economy — made sure opportunities were provided for blacks in federal government. Many also found jobs in the Postal Service, Defense Department and general printing office, but the work still primarily involved manual labor and “many failed to reach high pay,” Gooding said.

“In my experience, there are far fewer African-Americans in the higher grades,” said Monroe, who began her federal employment in 1987 with the IRS and is a chapter president with the National Treasury Employees union. “White people have the more lucrative jobs in the government. They are able to save, able to put money away for six months or a year’s worth of salary. It’s harder for black people. We’re always starting at the bottom.”

<https://www.apnews.com/55792de5cc4946b1844c028469389c9f>

The challenges for black workers at the federal level mirror the wage gap in the broader economy. The median black income in 2017 was \$40,258 for black households, compared with \$65,273 for their white counterparts, according to the Census Bureau.

Experts say the wage gap put black federal workers at a particular disadvantage during the shutdown.

“African-Americans, despite the opportunities, have generally not had all of the opportunities that whites have had and tend to be more concentrated in the bottom half of the federal workforce and are the most vulnerable to be hurt in a shutdown situation,” said Joseph McCartin, a labor history professor at Georgetown University.

The Rev. Tia Coulter of Greenbelt, Maryland, earned \$15,000 a year when she first started working for the federal government in the 1990s. She worked her way up to a program support assistant job with the Security and Exchange Commission but admitted this week that she was “struggling,” having already gone without one paycheck and with another now coming late.

“I’m happy to be going back to work with the possibility of getting paid,” she said Friday. “That being said, I am also leery of the upcoming months and what will happen on or after Feb. 15. I am hoping that some kind of plan will be put in place so that when these three weeks are up we continue working.”

Of the approximate 2.1 million federal executive branch employees in 2017, about 37 percent were ethnic minorities, according to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management. African-Americans made up 18.2 percent of the workforce, compared with 9 percent for Hispanics. Data listed 63 percent as white.

Those numbers do not include postal workers and members of the U.S. intelligence services.

In 2017, whites made up about [78 percent of the overall U.S. workforce](#) , according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Blacks comprised 13 percent.

Gary Morton, 58, of Philadelphia, started working for the federal government in 1981 with the IRS and has been with the EPA since 1992. He now works in the Land and Chemicals division and has missed out on more than \$4,000 in pay since the start of the shutdown.

Morton cut back on expenses and unnecessary purchases when the shutdown started.

“I’m really trying to buy only the basic necessities, food, pay my utility bill, still pay my church tithes,” said Morton, who is African-American and president of the American Federation of Government Employees Council 238. “I’m cooking more. I won’t go to McDonalds and buy a \$3 milkshake when I can get (a carton of) ice cream for \$2.50. I carry a case of water in the car now instead of pulling over for a \$2 beverage.”

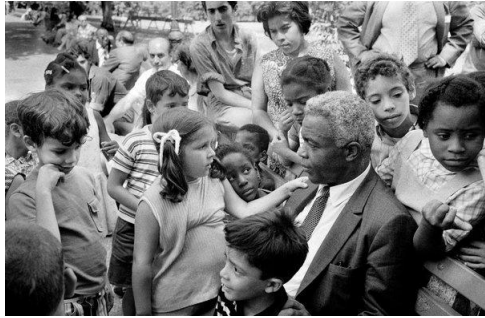
Coulter, who is black, said the shutdown has opened the eyes of many people relying on a government paycheck that’s becoming less of a sure thing during constant gridlock in Congress. Coulter said she’s looking at a less expensive place to live and thinking about a second source of income.

“I need to think about the savings aspect in the long run and prepare for another storm,” she said, referring to the shutdown. “Not all black families were taught about budgeting and money. This for me is like a lightbulb going on. I have to get my financial house in order.”

For Baseball and the Country, Jackie Robinson Changed the Game

By George Vecsey

The New York Times, January 31, 2019



Robinson greeting youngsters in Central Park. Aug. 4, 1970.

(Credit: Neal Boenzi/The New York Times)

This happened at Shea Stadium a few decades ago: My son and I were in a half-empty section, not far from two older black men.

One of the Mets made a clodhopper move on the bases, and was tagged out.

One of the two fans then turned to the other and said, “Jackie Robinson wouldn’t have done that.” I chortled, and we struck up a conversation, having the burning image of Jackie Robinson very much in common.

Jackie Robinson hovered over that game, and he has hovered over every game that has been played since April 15, 1947, when he made his major-league debut.

He upgraded the game, and he upgraded my Brooklyn Dodgers, and he upgraded life in America in his 10 years in the major leagues and in his short but active career out in the Real World, pushing for [opportunities](#) for black people in all businesses.

He raised the consciousness of Americans, whether they wanted it or not, and that is good reason to honor him on the [100th anniversary of his birth](#).

He was a hero in my family. I met him once, under the stands in Ebbets Field, in a hot dog line, during a game in 1954 when he wasn’t playing. We asked him how his injury was, and he answered a couple of teenagers with politeness. (I was shocked to see his gray hair and thickening midsection. He seemed old before his time. The stress seemed to have aged him.)

I also interviewed him once on the phone, around 1966, when I was doing a story on the absence of black coaches and managers in baseball.

When I called for the prearranged interview, he turned the theme around, asking how many black journalists were in the sports department where I worked. Umm, none, I said, thereby touching off a monologue on lack of opportunity everywhere. That’s what I’m talking about, he said. I consider the lecture a highlight of my career.

Decades later, I told his widow, Rachel Robinson, about our testy interview.

“That sounds like Jack,” she said, with her Mona Lisa smile.

The world was not paying attention when Jack Roosevelt Robinson was born on Jan. 31, 1919, in Cairo, Ga. Back east we began learning about him in 1945, when Branch Rickey signed him to a contract with the Brooklyn organization.

His presence in Dodger camp in 1946 was a big deal in my family’s home in Queens County, just east of the mother ship — that is to say, Brooklyn. We were Dodgers fans and my parents were also 1930s lefties who adored Franklin Delano Roosevelt and who regarded two other African-Americans, Marian Anderson and Paul Robeson, as icons, both for their singing talent and for their dignity.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/31/sports/baseball-jackie-robinson-integration.html>

Not all Dodgers fans came from our sociopolitical point of view, of course, but Jackie Robinson was on all Dodgers fans' minds as he trained with dubious white teammates in 1946 and then succeeded at the top farm club in Montreal that season.

The next year, the phone rang in our house on April 10. My dad was calling from his newspaper office and he had momentous news to relay: The Dodgers had signed Jackie Robinson to a major league contract and he would make his debut on Opening Day, five days later. I was almost 8; I can remember the exhilaration.

And if working-class white folks like us were enthused, it was even more personal for black folks, when there was finally a ballplayer who looked like them.

Ed Charles, the poet-third baseman of the 1969 Mets, who died a year ago, often talked about being a youth in Florida in the late 1940s, watching the touring Dodgers departing by railroad after an exhibition, watching Jackie Robinson play cards with his white teammates.

The Dodgers won the pennant in 1947, Robinson's first season, and just as important, they gave Brooklyn fans the lifelong certainty that our team was The Good Guys.

And what began for everyone in 1947 was a decade of Jackie Robinson on the field, running the bases pigeon-toed, a big man, a former tailback with adult weight on him, starting to take out infielders with a hard slide, starting to jaw at umpires, learning four new positions to help the Dodgers, bringing his burning audacity to the majors.

For a while, he wore the shackles of docility, to which he had committed, but on the field he was allowed to compete, fair and square. With bat. With glove. With feet. With head.

Black sports fans now had a new hero, excelling blatantly, in mixed company. That was something to sing about.

Sure enough, in 1949, Buddy Johnson (Woodrow Wilson Johnson, for the record) wrote and recorded a song called "Did You See Jackie Robinson Hit That Ball?" It was soon covered by the great band of Count Basie.

Did you see Jackie Robinson hit that ball? Did he hit it? Yeah, and that ain't all. He stole home. Yes, yes, Jackie's real gone.

Because of Robinson some Americans were lifted up from our stodginess and were able to appreciate a gifted athlete and a driven human being, excelling where no player of color had been allowed since the 19th Century.

Robinson's style even spread around baseball as black players proliferated: Larry Doby, Roy Campanella, Don Newcombe, Monte Irvin, and in 1951 a wonder-man named Willie Mays, and then Frank Robinson and Henry Aaron and Ernie Banks and Roberto Clemente, all of whom made the National League the powerhouse for the next generation.

Perhaps, too, Jackie Robinson served as an example for a series of *begats*. James Baldwin. Nina Simone. Malcolm X. Rosa Parks. Martin Luther King Jr. Muhammad Ali. Chuck Berry. John Lewis. Dick Gregory. Harry Belafonte. Harry Edwards. Jim Brown. Bob Gibson. Reggie Jackson. Bill Russell. Shirley Chisholm. Barack Obama. Michelle Robinson Obama.

In 2008, I asked Rachel Robinson what her husband would have thought of the Obama candidacy.

"That is a political question, George," she said, smiling. "And we don't talk about politics."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/31/sports/baseball-jackie-robinson-integration.html>

Her husband had been overcome by diabetes in retirement, and was clearly failing during the 1972 World Series, when he was introduced to Joe Morgan, the thoughtful young star of the Cincinnati Reds. Morgan was thrilled, but also stunned, to see Robinson, the man who danced off third base, now white-haired and shaky and going blind. Jackie Robinson died a few weeks later, at the age of 53.

Thirty-five years later, Morgan, a Hall of Fame member and broadcaster, was at a celebration of the Jackie Robinson Foundation. (Morgan calls Rachel Robinson “The Queen Mother.”)

I stood with Morgan and Willie Randolph, who grew up in Brooklyn, as we watched old game films of a sleek, fleet tailback for U.C.L.A. in 1939 and 1940, going wide, faking tacklers onto the ground.

Did we see Jackie Robinson carry the ball?

We exchanged high-fives at his audacity.

'She was an original': Rosemary Mariner, groundbreaking Navy aviator, dies at 65

Stars and Stripes, January 30, 2019



Rosemary Mariner is shown in the 1990s when she was commanding officer of a squadron on the West Coast. (U.S. Navy)

Rosemary Mariner, who was one of the first group of female aviators in the Navy and continued to break barriers throughout her career, died Thursday at the age of 65.

Her [obituary](#) said that Mariner, who retired as a captain, had ovarian cancer. In 1973, she was one of the first eight women chosen to fly Navy aircraft, according to the service. She was the Navy's first female jet pilot to fly the A-4C and the A-7E Corsair

II. In 1990, she became the first woman in the military to command an operational air squadron. During her 24 years of service, Mariner logged more than 3,500 flight hours in 15 types of aircraft.

She had wanted to be a pilot since she was a child. Her father, an Air Force pilot, died in a plane crash when she was 3, according to *An Encyclopedia of American Women at War*. Her family moved to California and she grew up watching the planes at Miramar Naval Air Station. She washed planes and cleaned houses to earn money for flight school.

In a [1982 Glamour feature](#), Mariner said that whether a servicemember goes into combat should reflect an individual's ability, not gender.

“In modern warfare, the emphasis is not on physical strength, but on brain power operating sophisticated weapons systems,” she said. “A machine gun is a great equalizer.”



Ensign Rosemary Conatser, whose married name later became Rosemary Mariner, at the controls of an antisubmarine aircraft at Naval Air Station Oceana, Virginia, on Jan. 9, 1975. (Naval and Marine Records)

After her Navy career, she taught military history classes at the University of Tennessee and was an adviser for the Department of the Navy and media outlets.

She lived in Norris, Tenn., with her husband of 40 years, Tommy Mariner, a retired Navy commander. Their daughter, Emmalee, attends Duke University.

She was known for her leadership and many tributes have noted her contributions to the fight to end the ban on women in combat aviation. Tammie Jo Shults, a former Navy pilot who served under Mariner, [told National Public Radio](#) that the changes Mariner was a part of had “huge ripples of effect.”

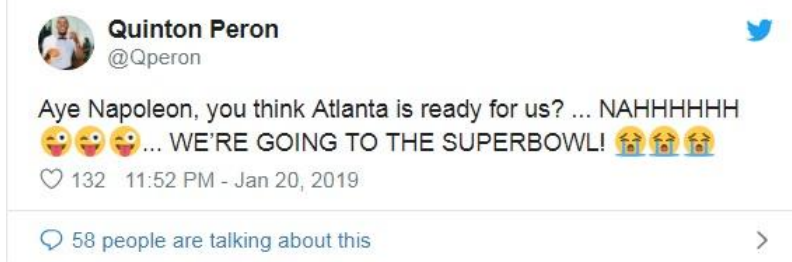
SEE ALSO:

[Navy to Honor First Female Fighter Pilot with Female-Piloted Flyover at Funeral](#) [USNI, 2019-01-30]

There've never been male cheerleaders at the Super Bowl. That's about to change

By Doug Criss

CNN, January 28, 2019



History will be made Sunday at the Super Bowl, but it will happen on the sidelines, not on the field.

That's where you'll spot Quinton Peron and Napoleon Jinnies when the New England Patriots take on the Los Angeles Rams in [Super Bowl LIII in Atlanta](#).

Peron and Jinnies will be the first male cheerleaders at the Super Bowl in NFL history, [cheering for the Rams alongside](#) their female counterparts. The men already made history at the start of this season when they -- along with [dancer Jesse Hernandez](#) of the New Orleans Saints' cheerleading squad -- became the [first male cheerleaders in league history](#).

In a tweet last week after his Rams secured a spot in the big game, Peron sent out a shout out to his squadmate.

"Napoleon, you think Atlanta is ready for us?" Peron tweeted. "NAHHHHHHH. We're going to the Super Bowl!"

The men, both dancers, made the Rams cheerleading squad back in March. Jinnies called making the team a "humbling and amazing" experience. Peron said there wasn't a good reason for him not to try out for the squad.

"I was at (an L.A.) Lakers game (right before making the team) and I was watching the Laker Girls," Peron told "Good Morning America" last summer, "and I was asking myself, 'Why can't I be down there?' I've choreographed for girls who dance on pro teams, I've danced with girls on various pro teams. I just thought, 'why not me?'"

Other teams, like the Indianapolis Colts and the Baltimore Ravens, have had stuntmen before, USA Today reported, but Peron and Jinnies danced alongside their female teammates and did the same moves during the season.

Peron and Jinnies' success inspired 25-year-old Jesse Hernandez to try out for the New Orleans Saints' Saintsations cheerleading team.

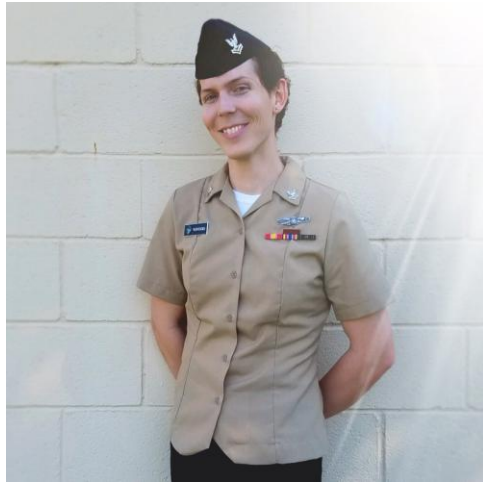
He told CNN affiliate KATC that his mom sent him a link with their story.

"She told me it was my time to shine," [he said in a video posted before his final audition](#).

Transgender military personnel in limbo over Trump plan

By David Crary

The Associated Press, January 26, 2019



This 2017 photo provided by Lambda Legal in January 2019 shows Megan Winters at Joint Base Anacostia-Billing in Washington. Among those active-duty trans service members is Winters, 30, a plaintiff in the Lambda-Outserve lawsuit who has been in the Navy almost six years. She formerly served with the Office of Naval Intelligence in Washington and now is assigned to the aircraft carrier USS George H. W. Bush, based in Norfolk, Va. "I do my job to the best of my ability every single day and will do that as long as I'm able to," she said in a telephone interview. "I recall how I felt the first time I put on the uniform. I genuinely wish that upon any American who wishes to serve." Asked if Tuesday, Jan. 22, 2019 Supreme Court vote made her apprehensive, Winters paused before

saying it was hard to answer. (Lambda Legal via AP)

NEW YORK (AP) — Long term, lawyers and activists battling to ensure that transgender people can serve openly in the U.S. military are convinced they will prevail. Short term, they are braced for anguishing consequences if the Trump administration proceeds with its plan to sharply restrict such service.

The U.S. Supreme Court, in a 5-4 vote Tuesday, gave the administration the green light to put the policy into effect even as legal challenges continue.

"I'm absolutely optimistic with respect to the long-term prospects," said Sharon McGowan, legal director of the LGBT rights group Lambda Legal, which is pressing one of the lawsuits. "The question is: How long is the long term?"

McGowan and other activists see parallels between the battle and the 17-year saga involving the "don't ask, don't tell" policy that prohibited gay men and women from serving openly in the armed forces. After prolonged controversy and litigation — as well as the discharge of more than 13,000 military personnel — Congress repealed the Clinton-era policy in 2010, and gay service members were able to serve openly beginning in 2011.

LGBT rights activist Andy Blevins, who served in the Navy from 2007 to 2011, said he underwent three investigations related to "don't ask" before he was finally discharged on medical grounds. He is now executive director of OutServe-SLDN, which represents LGBT personnel in the military and is engaged in the litigation against the Trump plan.

Blevins grows emotional in describing the "daily struggle" to keep his sexual orientation a secret before repeal of "don't ask," yet he suggested that currently serving transgender people face even tougher circumstances. They were told in 2016, in the waning months of the Obama administration, that they would be able to serve openly, then were jolted in 2017 when President Donald Trump tweeted his intention to ban all transgender people from the military.

"They were told it's OK to be transgender ... then the rug is pulled out from under these dedicated service members," Blevins said.

Yet he said activists have made major progress in convincing politicians and the public that the Trump plan is based on misinformation and prejudice.

<https://www.apnews.com/990cb347f5a24eac85b47550b43fb68f>

“We have optimism that we’re going to win the war,” he said. “This is just a setback, a speed bump.”

OutServe-SLDN’s legal director, Peter Perkowski, is teaming with Lambda Legal lawyers on one of four lawsuits challenging Trump’s plan. Though he shares Blevins’ long-term optimism, he is wary of the outcome if any of the lawsuits reach the Supreme Court, now with a solidified conservative majority thanks to the addition of Trump appointees Neal Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh.

“There’s a certain segment of the court that’s kind of hostile to our issues in the LGBTQ community,” Perkowski said. “Beyond that, I don’t make any predictions.”

Meanwhile, Perkowski said, transgender people seeking to enlist are frustrated by legal uncertainties, while currently serving trans personnel are worried about their job security.

“They just want to continue to do their jobs without this cloud hanging over them, without being tagged as inadequate,” he said.

Among those active-duty trans service members is Megan Winters, 30, a plaintiff in the Lambda-Outserve lawsuit who has been in the Navy almost six years. She formerly served with the Office of Naval Intelligence in Washington and now is assigned to the aircraft carrier USS George H. W. Bush, based in Norfolk, Virginia.

“I do my job to the best of my ability every single day and will do that as long as I’m able to,” she said in a telephone interview. “I recall how I felt the first time I put on the uniform. I genuinely wish that upon any American who wishes to serve.”

Asked if Tuesday’s Supreme Court vote made her apprehensive, Winters paused before saying it was hard to answer.

“I want to tell you I stand steadfast and hold my head up high — but it is a little difficult,” she said. “The president of the United States is my commander in chief. If they called for the end of transgender service, if it’s a lawful order I would have to obey it. But I truly want to continue serving my country.”

According to a report issued by the Pentagon last year, there were 8,980 service members who identify as transgender.

Details of how the Trump plan might be implemented remain unclear; some currently serving trans personnel — perhaps including Winters — might be able to remain in the military. However, the court vote clears the way for the Pentagon to bar enlistment by people who have undergone a gender transition. It also would allow the administration to require that military personnel serve in accordance with their biological gender unless they began a gender transition under the Obama-era rules.

Activists doubt the current Republican-controlled Senate would move to block the transgender ban. And it would face a potential Trump veto if it did so.

However, Aaron Belkin of the California-based Palm Center, which studies LGBT-related military issues, said public opinion now favors transgender military service, and added, “The Democrats will reinstate an inclusive policy on the first day they’re back in power.”

Supporters of Trump’s efforts include Tony Perkins, a Marine veteran who is president of the conservative Family Research Council. He says the courts should not interfere with the ability of the U.S. president as commander in chief to set military policy.

“The Pentagon isn’t in the business of equality,” Perkins said recently. “Either the military’s priority is protecting America — or it’s helping people on the path to self-actualization. It can’t do both.”

<https://www.apnews.com/990cb347f5a24eac85b47550b43fb68f>

But Lambda Legal's McGowan said top military commanders have said there were minimal problems related to the Obama administration's moves to allow transgender service. The Trump policy, she said, "has nothing to do with national security or unit cohesion — it's about throwing red meat to a portion of Trump's political base."

McGowan evoked Katie Schmid, a South Korea-based Army staff sergeant who is a plaintiff in Lambda's lawsuit.

"They're telling Katie, you're unfit to die for this country," McGowan said. "I can't think of a more offensive thing to say to someone willing to put their life on the line."

For LGBT rights leaders, Trump's proposed ban is only one of several attacks on transgender Americans. They also cite a Justice Department memo concluding that civil rights laws don't protect transgender people from workplace discrimination and the scrapping of Obama-era guidance encouraging school officials to let transgender students use bathrooms of their choice.

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SEE ALSO:

[Donald Trump's 'trans ban' reverses more than 70 years of military integration](#) [*The Washington Post*, 2019-01-29] [OPINION]

[Smith says he won't derail the NDAA over transgender troop ban](#) [*Defense News*, 2019-01-28]

Union official says veteran groups need to be more inclusive of women, LGBT

By Tess Bonn

The Hill, January 28, 2019

An official from a veterans union group on Monday called the “don’t ask, don’t tell” (DADT) policy repealed in 2011 “barbaric,” and said that veteran groups need to “retool” their priorities to be more inclusive of LGBT and female veterans.

“When we went off to war in Iraq and Afghanistan, one nobody thought we were going to be there as long as we have been for sure but nobody really took a look at the changing demographics of the veterans community,” Will Attig, who is an executive director of the Union Veterans Council, told Hill.TV’s Buck Sexton and Jamal Simmons on “Rising.”

“We still had ‘don’t ask, don’t tell,’ which was a barbaric system that didn’t achieve anything,” Attig continued, referring to the law that prohibited LGBT Americans from openly serving in the military for decades. It was repealed in 2011 under the Obama administration.

The union official added that veteran organizations need to “retool” their focus to address the changing veteran population, especially when it comes to female service members.

He said the Union Veterans Council has already started taking steps to address the issue, such as creating more development and training programs for returning female military personnel.

“At the Union Veteran’s Council, we’re working to create workforce development to focus in on our female veterans not for traditional jobs, we’re talking about construction, ironworker jobs,” he told Hill.TV.

Even though the majority of veterans and active-duty service members are still men, women make up 9 percent of the veteran community, according to [an analysis by the Pew Research Center](#). This number is expected to double by 2045.

An [estimated one million veterans](#) identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

An [analysis by The Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law](#) found that there are at least 134,000 transgender veterans alone.

Transgender service members have openly serviced in the military since 2016, despite repeated efforts by President Trump to renew the ban on transgender troops.

The Supreme Court allowed the administration in a 5-4 ruling this month to temporarily enforce its restrictions on transgender people serving in the military as the case continues to make its way through the legal system.

The Supreme Court’s decision does leave one nationwide injunction on Trump’s order in place. As a result, Pentagon officials said they cannot completely implement the new policy yet.

Women set new records in legislative leadership

By Reid Wilson

The Hill, January 28, 2019



(© Getty Images)

More women will hold leadership positions in state legislatures across the country than at any time in history, after a wave of new women won election in the 2018 midterms.

Six state House chambers will be led by women speakers, and nine state Senates will be headed by women, according to The Hill's analysis of newly elected state legislative leaders.

And 51 women will hold top leadership positions in their respective legislative chambers, from New Hampshire's deputy speaker of the House to Senate minority leaders in Oklahoma, California and Florida.

The vast majority of women in elected leadership positions are Democrats, including five of the six House speakers and six of the nine Senate presidents. Two of the three Republican women who lead state Senate chambers — Alaska's Cathy Giessel and Arizona's Karen Fann — won election to the top spot this year.

But 15 state legislatures are still entirely run by men, with no women serving in top legislative leadership positions. Those include Deep South states like Mississippi and Alabama, as well as blue and purple states like Rhode Island, Illinois and Pennsylvania.

Overall, 2,112 women hold seats in the nation's 99 state legislative chambers, according to a tally maintained by [the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University](#) -- an all-time high.

Women picked up more than 200 legislative seats in the 2018 midterm elections, and they now hold almost 29 percent of the 7,383 legislative seats across the country. That's higher than the percentage of women who hold seats in Congress or governorships.

Nevada this year became the first state in American history in which women hold a majority of the state legislative seats. Western states like Colorado, Oregon, Washington and Alaska also have high numbers of women legislators.

Nine women serve as governors of their home states, and fifteen women serve as lieutenant governors. There are seven female attorneys general, and eleven women serving as Secretary of State. All told, women hold 86 statewide executive offices across the country, or about 28 percent of the number of positions that are elected statewide.

Miscellaneous

Active-Duty Military Suicides at Record Highs in 2018

By Patricia Kime

Military.com, January 30, 2019



Lt. Cmdr. Karen Downer writes a name on a Suicide Awareness Memorial Canvas in honor of Suicide Awareness Month at Naval Hospital Jacksonville, Sept. 10, 2018. (U.S. Navy/Jacob Sippel, Naval Hospital Jacksonville).

The U.S. military finished 2018 with a troubling, sad statistic: It experienced the highest number of suicides among active-duty personnel in at least six years.

A total of 321 active-duty members took their lives during the year, including 57 Marines, 68 sailors, 58 airmen, and 138 soldiers.

The deaths equal the total number of active-duty personnel who died by suicide in 2012, the record since the services began closely tracking the issue in 2001.

Suicide continues to present a challenge to the Pentagon and the military services, which have instituted numerous programs to save lives, raise awareness and promote prevention. Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert Neller, in his 2019 guidance to Marines released Friday, urged them to consider the lasting impact that a "permanent solution to a temporary problem" can have.

"We pride ourselves on building tough, resilient, mission-focused Marines, but we also pride ourselves on taking care of our own. ... While there is no dishonor in coming up short or needing help, there is no honor in quitting. MARINES NEVER QUIT ON EACH OTHER!" Neller wrote.

The Corps' 57 active-duty deaths represent a 25 percent increase from 2017, the highest number of suicides since the service began closely tracking them in 2001.

The Corps also lost 18 Reserve members in 2018 to suicide, second only to 2016, when 19 Marine reservists took their own lives. The service began tracking such deaths in the reserve component in 2012.

The number of Navy suicides -- 68 sailors in 2018, up from 65 in 2017 -- also was a record and marked a steep increase in the suicide rate among active-duty Navy personnel. Just five years ago, when the Navy recorded 41 suicides among active-duty sailors, the suicide rate was 12.7 deaths per 100,000 sailors; now the rate is more than 20 deaths per 100,000. The Navy is the only service that publishes its data, including calculated suicide rates, online.

According to Air Force officials, 58 active-duty airmen took their lives, while three Reserve members died by their own hands. The number represents a decline from previous years, down from 63 in 2015 and 2017, and 61 in 2016, but is still troubling, said Brig. Gen. Michael Martin, director of Air Force Integrated Resilience.

"We are not satisfied with flat-lined suicide death numbers. The Air Force is dedicated to a comprehensive, leadership-driven strategy with the ultimate goal of supporting airmen and their families early with a robust network and never losing another airman to suicide," Martin said in a statement.

The Army referred requests on the data to the Defense Suicide Prevention Office, which has not published the year-end totals. But it also noted in an email that 138 soldiers died as the result of suicide in 2018.

<https://www.military.com/daily-news/2019/01/30/active-duty-military-suicides-near-record-highs-2018.html>

Those deaths mark the highest number of suicides in the active-duty Army since 2012, but are markedly lower than that year, when 165 soldiers took their own lives.

Army spokeswoman Col. Kathleen Turner said the loss of any soldier or family member is a tragedy.

"Like the rest of America, the Army continues to grapple with the loss of too many of our people to suicide," Turner said. "While the Army has made progress, more work needs to be done. We must continue to ensure commanders have the policies and resources they need to prevent suicides, that all leaders have the tools to identify soldiers who are suffering and to positively intervene, and that all soldiers view seeking mental health care as a sign of strength."

The U.S. military is not unique in struggling with the impact of suicide. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, suicide rates in the U.S. have increased in nearly every state since 1999. And while mental health conditions often are seen as the cause of suicide, it's "rarely caused by any single factor," according to the CDC.

DSPO has been without a permanent chief since October 2017, when former director Keita Franklin moved to head the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#)' suicide prevention office.

It last sponsored a conference on suicide prevention in August 2017 and held a suicide prevention month in September 2018, which included hosting an outreach event, attending resource fairs at various locations, and promoting awareness campaigns.

The suicide rates for the military services -- data that help Pentagon leadership understand the scope of the issue compared with civilian populations -- are not generally published by the individual services. They are calculated based on the number of deaths and population of the services and published in an annual DoD Suicide Event Report, or DoDSER.

The last DoDSER was for 2016, when the rate across all the military services was 21.1 deaths per 100,000 active-duty service members.

Rates for the individual services that year were:

- 19.4 per 100,000, based on 61 deaths, for the Air Force;
- 26.7 per 100,000, based on 127 deaths, for the Army;
- 15.3 per 100,000 based on 50 deaths, for the Navy;
- and 21 per 100,000, based on 37 deaths, for the Marine Corps.

According to the Navy, the adjusted rate of suicide in the civilian population for men of the same age as those who serve in the [armed forces](#), is 26.8 per 100,000.

Military personnel who need need help can call the Veterans Crisis Line at 800-273-8255. Suicidal troops and veterans can call the Military Crisis Line at 800-273-8255, press 1, for assistance, or text 838255.

-- Staff reporter Oriana Pawlyk contributed to this report.

-- Patricia Kime can be reached at Patricia.Kime@Military.com. Follow her on Twitter @patriciakime.

After a rough 2018, Army recruiting is trying to turn around both its strategies and its notorious culture

By Meghann Myers

Army Times, January 29, 2019



Future soldiers recite the oath of enlistment during a mass enlistment ceremony in Glendale, Ariz. (Alun Thomas/Army)

There's really no way to sugarcoat it: Being an [Army recruiter](#) is a grueling, frustrating job, and many noncommissioned officers who get that selection phone call dread the cutting of those new orders.

And while that's not the only experience to be had in recruiting, it is a common one, and one that Army leadership is trying to address.

Army leadership has in recent months [lamented an "industrial era," "brute force"](#) approach to recruiting that got the job done well enough in the last decades of the 21st century but is deeply lacking for today.

With that came what some recruiters have called a pervasive toxic command climate, where NCOs were pressured to make endless cold calls and frenzied follow-ups with leads, and if they didn't make numbers, there would be consequences — like [more Saturday shifts](#) and training with the sergeant major over the holidays.

"Operating that way is just so counter to my leadership style and to our philosophy," Maj. Gen. Frank Muth, the head of Army Recruiting Command, told Army Times in a Jan. 14 phone interview.

In fiscal year 2018, the Army gave itself an ambitious, out-sized goal: Bring 80,000 new soldiers into the force.

At about the half-year mark, that number dropped to 76,500, as historically high retention rates took some of the pressure off recruiting.

But recruiting stations were still feeling the strain, working with their highest quotas in a decade and a shortage of about 400 personnel, because while the Army had been looking forward to an end strength increase that kicked off in early 2017, the recruiter selection and training process had not surged in time to meet the new accessions demand.

In the end, Army leadership announced in September, they missed the goal by 6,500.

The after-action reports had several conclusions: The Army needs to keep the recruiting billets at a level commensurate with increased accessions goals during an end strength build-up; marketing needs a complete overhaul, to include commercials, promotional events, research and social media; and the recruiting focus must turn from mainstay Southern and Midwestern towns toward large, highly populated urban areas.

Much has been said about USAREC's new lease on life, with targeted demographic data, a revamped website and advertising — including the fresh ["Warriors Wanted"](#) slogan —, and a robust social media presence. A 21st century recruiting enterprise will help the Army create the 21st century force it needs to dominate the conflicts they see on the horizon, leaders say.

<https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/01/29/after-a-rough-2018-army-recruiting-is-trying-to-turn-around-both-its-strategies-and-its-notorious-culture/>

And at the same time, Muth and Command Sgt. Maj. Tabitha Gavia, USAREC's senior enlisted leader, are trying to lead by example, paying special attention to morale, as they spend their time traveling to recruiting stations around the country.

"I'm of the belief that you don't need to utilize those philosophies to emphasize the importance and to drive numbers in recruiting," he said of harsh command cultures.

The way ahead

There are 22 cities on USAREC's list of [major metropolitan regions](#) with somewhat untapped populations of 18- to 24-year-olds.

In mid-January, Muth hit the road with Gavia to cover a major swath of the West Coast, to see how things are going and to spread the news on how they're going to make it better.

The two hit Orange County, Los Angeles, San Luis Obispo, Morro Bay, Portland and Seattle over several days.

The trip came a week after the [New York Times](#) published a story about the Army zeroing in on "liberal-leaning cities," and while the characterization is accurate, politics are not part of the strategy, the head of Army Training and Doctrine Command told Army Times on Jan. 7.

"That's not how we see it. In fact, some of these cities, you can't characterize them that way," Gen. Stephen Townsend said. "We see it as a growing population."

Many soldiers selected for recruiting end up stationed in or near their hometowns, with the idea that they can relate to the kids growing up there, and they can take those years to spend more time around family and old friends.

But other than that, Townsend said, recruiting stations weren't working off of any real intelligence on their areas of operations. So, now the Army is doing the research to find out what matters to the parents and teenagers they're trying to engage.

They're also taking a different, more simplified approach to outreach. Recruiters have told leadership that when they ask young people why they haven't considered Army service, they tend to have much the same response.

"They say, 'Well, I don't really know anything about it,'" Townsend said.

And what they do know, Muth said, might sway them far in the other direction.

"The first thing is, of course, they think of the Army as infantry, armor and artillery," Muth said. "And when you say, 'Well, we have 150 jobs,' they go, 'What?'"

The U.S. Army Career Navigator app can really open their eyes, Gavia said. And so can engaging with stakeholders — for example, by meeting with educators and community leaders, maybe taking them on a field trip to a nearby Army installation.

"We stress that the Army is a choice, and with that choice, you get a job, you can get an education, and even a technical certificate or a license," Gavia said.

Leadership also wants to empower the NCOs themselves to chart new territory in the recruiting game.

Step 1: Social media.

<https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/01/29/after-a-rough-2018-army-recruiting-is-trying-to-turn-around-both-its-strategies-and-its-notorious-culture/>

“The reason we weren’t on it earlier — apparently the Army made a foray into that space, and some guys got themselves into bad places,” Townsend said. “So, instead of trying to figure out how to do it well, the Army just shut it down.”

But the 2018 postmortem made it abundantly clear that the Army was not going to be able to reach young people by telephone alone, so recruiters got the go-ahead to fire up Instagram, Twitch and others.

With that move, USAREC published some social media rules of engagement. Among their tips are:

- Be professional. Creativity is encouraged, but it must still represent the Army and its values.
- Do not use political posts or endorsements.
- Before you post, ask yourself: What message am I sending about soldiers and the Army?

“We know there’s going to be contentious discussion and dialogue, no matter what we do,” Muth said. “But let’s not operate on that same level. Maintain professionalism and go from there.”

Most feeds feature recruiters at events, or future soldiers after taking an enlistment oath. Some have ventured into more edgy territory. In a now-deleted post, the Los Angeles Recruiting Battalion tapped into the social media frenzy around Netflix’s “Bird Box” movie.



A post to the Los Angeles recruiting battalion's Instagram account was deleted after leadership determined it violated Army social media guidelines.

“That is not even close to the tone and texture, and the philosophy, that has been established by myself and Command Sgt. Maj. Gavia,” Muth said.

Those responsible for the exchange have been reminded of the rules, Muth added.

“That’s just not the way we’re going to engage with the American public,” he said.

How they are engaging, officials have said, is by meeting America’s youth where they are.

According to Army research, they are very much gaming online or watching their favorite gamers on a Twitch live stream. So, the Army is going to them.

More than 6,500 soldiers have signed up to fill about 20 spots on the service’s [esports](#) team, which will travel to gaming tournaments and live stream their own sessions when they’re not on the road.

Even if you’re not part of the unit, Muth said, he wants recruiters to get on the bandwagon as well.

“We’re encouraging recruiting stations to buy gaming systems and enter local competitions,” he added.

<https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/01/29/after-a-rough-2018-army-recruiting-is-trying-to-turn-around-both-its-strategies-and-its-notorious-culture/>

USAREC is also offering incentives, to make the job more palatable, if not easier. In October, current recruiters got an offer to receive an extra \$1,500 a month if they agreed to extend their three-year orders for two more.

The move was meant to fill a 390-billet shortfall in the recruiter force, with a Jan. 15 deadline. Recruiter billets are now filled at 100 percent, USAREC spokeswoman Lisa Ferguson told Army Times on Jan. 22.

For those still interested in a bonus, [a new program](#) allows recruiters to extend their orders for between 90 days and 12 months, receiving \$1,500 per committed month in a lump sum.

In the meantime, the command team is continuing its trips to recruiting stations around the country and holding operational assessments at the battalion and brigade levels. The meetings give leadership a chance to “look them in the eye” and tell them, “This is how we conduct business,” Gavia said.

“They’re understanding that they are empowered to take the mission by the horns and accomplish it,” she said of the feedback she received during her West Coast trip. “Everyone around them, Gen. Muth and myself, we are there to support the recruiter on the ground.

“There’s an uplift in morale,” Muth added. “That is clear. It’s palpable.”

‘Toxic command climate’

That boost can’t come quickly enough for many recruiters.

There are always a handful of factors at play that can affect the recruiting environment. A bad economy, as was the case about a decade ago, can really drive enlistments as high school graduates try to line up jobs.

But a high operational tempo and dozens of news stories about fallen troops, as was the case a decade ago, can detract from the attractiveness of sending one’s child into military service.

The Army clocked some of its highest recruiting numbers as the U.S. surged troops in Iraq and then in Afghanistan, but it wasn’t easy getting there. It involved a lot of waivers for past misconduct, and the pace [took a toll](#) on the NCOs working to get them cleared.

Now, as the Army faces a mandate to grow in the face of a much improved economy, and a [declining number of American youth](#) who are physically and behaviorally sound enough to serve, tensions have ratcheted up.

This frustration blossomed in 2017 when an Army recruiter, whose identity has been withheld to prevent any career repercussions, ventured onto Facebook to set up the [Truth of Army Recruiting](#) page.

“So, I was sitting around my house one day and just thought to myself, ‘What can I do to help spread knowledge and what recruiters actually go through?’” the administrator told Army Times.

It started as an anonymous outlet for rants and raves, but soon picked up followers and a few post shares from the popular U.S. Army W.T.F! Moments Facebook page.

“The page shares everything good, bad or indifferent about USAREC,” he said. “It’s my opinion that this current command is trying to change USAREC for the better.”

But that hope comes out of dark experience.

“For many years, the one constant was toxic leadership being developed and the stigma recruiting has carried,” he said. “USAREC has always treated its people poorly and wonders why people have so much negative to say.”

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And, he added, junior leaders who cut their teeth in recruiting have carried those toxic methods into roles with more and bigger responsibilities.

In May, the commander of the Texas-based [5th Recruiting Brigade](#) drafted a memo threatening to increase Saturday shifts and extend weekday hours because of unmet quotas.

In December, the commander of the Mid-Atlantic recruiting battalion sent a scathing memo to his force, announcing that those recruiting stations who had not made mission would be spending their traditional holiday half-time schedule in full-time remedial training with the sergeant major.

That memo quickly made its way to Truth of Army Recruiting and may have been the catalyst for some change up top — starting with holiday schedules.

“A big part of the page is to expose those people, because there are some good leaders out there, but the problem is that there are only a few, not many,” the admin said.

Starting this year, recruiters will have holiday leave from Dec. 24 to Jan. 2, Muth said.

“I do believe the current command team wants to help purge the middle layer to change the culture of recruiting for the better, but it’s so poisoned from the previous command team and many before, it’s near impossible,” the admin said.

His hope is that beyond exposing toxic leaders, his page gives other recruiters a place to go for advice, and a place to congratulate each other when a job is well done.

“It’s all about them and trying to help them out,” he said. “They always have an anonymous place to vent here.”

Undermanned and under pressure

While Muth and Gavia work to set a positive example for leadership at USAREC, the strain of a somewhat anemic force still figures heavily. The Army is shooting for about 66,000 new soldiers this year, per the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act, while trying to fill empty recruiter billets.

The number of vacancies hovered around 400 in 2018, about 5 percent of the roughly 8,000 total force. As of early January, that gap has been filled.

Still, as Army recruiting gets a handle on the way forward, there are concerns in the operational force that the shortage in one organization is only exacerbating the gaps in another.

The Army is short staff sergeants. To address that issue, Sergeant Major of the Army Dan Dailey has spearheaded myriad policy tweaks, including raising [retention control points](#), mandating [automatic local board appearances](#) for promotable specialists and sergeants, and offering [big retention bonuses](#) to mid-grade NCOs.

The good news is that those changes have shown some success. Army retention is up to 86 percent, a significant boost to its historical 81 percent.

The bad news is that growing the force requires more recruits, and therefore more recruiters and drill sergeants to start off their careers.

And where does one find more recruiters and drill sergeants? In the operational force. And further, infantrymen are the Army’s biggest military occupational specialty, and they are uniquely qualified to develop more potential infantrymen.

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Trainees arrive for the first day of one-station unit training at Fort Benning, Ga. After failing to grow last year, the Army is overhauling its recruiting efforts in the new year. (Patrick A. Albright/Army)

On the other hand, according to one senior noncommissioned officer, there are concerns about the standards being used to get there.

Recently, one of his squad leaders was tapped for recruiting duty despite some recent legal trouble, he said.

“In that specific incident — while we were deployed, he was accused of hazing,” said the NCO, who spoke to Army Times on the condition of anonymity. “The 15-6 returned that it was founded ... so, technically, a little over a year ago now, he was punished under Article 15 for hazing.”

Human Resources Command said it would probably be waived due to the time frame, the NCO said, and to continue filling out the packet.

According to regulation, a substantiated hazing case requires a higher-level review before cutting recruiting orders, but it doesn’t prevent an NCO from recruiting duty. Offenses like sexual assault do, for example.

“The Army continues to ensure that only high quality, morally qualified noncommissioned officers serve as recruiters,” Army spokesman Lt. Col. Emanuel Ortiz told Army Times in a statement. “The Army has not and will not lower qualification standards for recruiting duty.”

The ironic thing, the infantry NCO added, is that this soldier has large holes in his ear lobes from old piercings, so he will probably have his orders canceled anyway. The same thing happened to another guy in the battalion recently, he added.

“It’s very well known in the operational force right now that drill and recruiting are getting ruthless,” the NCO said.

In his division, he said, “at least” two brigades are bleeding experienced NCOs because so many are getting picked up for recruiting or drill sergeant duties.

“When I say ‘tapped out’ — most platoons only have one or two staff sergeants,” he said. “There should be four. And at least one of those should be seasoned.”

His company has one sergeant first class, which means two other platoons have E-6s serving as their top enlisted leaders.

“Meaning all of your squad leaders — including the weapons squad leader, who is usually a seasoned staff sergeant — are newly promoted sergeants,” he said. “You basically have guys who have only been in two or three years themselves now as the most senior squad leader.”

That lack of experience causes dysfunction, he said, which trickles down to the next rotation of soldiers in the units. When they come back from broadening opportunities, the NCO added, their skills have been eroded.

And on top of that, he said, USAREC is reluctant to let recruiters take time off to attend career-advancing schools that are crucial to 11Bs.

Because of the length of some schools — for instance, two-plus months for Ranger qualification — the recruiting enterprise is reluctant to loan out its personnel.

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“We are working to open further opportunities for professional development, especially occupation-specific schools,” USAREC spokeswoman Lisa Ferguson told Army Times.

If a soldier is interested in a school, they should speak to their career managers and work on a packet anyway, she added.

“These school slots are often attached to a follow-on position and are more likely to be approved as soldiers near the completion of their recruiting assignment,” Ferguson said.

Despite the challenges now, Muth said, recruiters should look to see improvements in the next couple of months, as Army pollsters wrap up their research and push new, precise data to recruiting stations.

With the efficiencies USAREC is working on, like targeted marketing, demographic analysis and more powerful online tools, Townsend said, there’s a possibility the Army won’t be trying so hard to balance the needs of the operational and recruiting forces because they just won’t need as many recruiters.

“I think that it is within our reach, if we do these reforms that we’re talking about, that we can cut the recruiting force by 25 percent, 30 percent – maybe half, I don’t know,” he said.

For now, according to both Muth and Townsend, there are already some early signs that their new philosophy is producing returns on investment.

Four of USAREC’s five general recruiting brigades, comparing the first quarter of 2019 to the same in 2018, have beat their best numbers.

“Last month, six battalions met 100 percent of their mission,” Muth said.

Chicago, the test kitchen for new, neighborhood-targeted marketing, beat last year’s first-quarter numbers.

“Two new ones that have not made mission in a long time? [Los Angeles] and Portland,” Muth said. “Very difficult markets, and they both made 100 percent last month.”

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SEE ALSO:

[The Army’s recruiting force is finally fully manned. Soon, leaders hope, they won’t need so many.](#) [*Army Times*, 2019-01-31]

Army Reserve chief: Manning, fitness test challenges are under control

By Meghann Myers

Army Times, January 29, 2019



Lt. Gen. Charles Luckey, chief of the Army Reserve, participates in the drag event during the Army Combat Fitness Test pilot program Jan. 10, 2019 in Austin, Texas. (Sgt. 1st Class Javier Orona/Army)

While it is in the midst of a “renaissance,” as it’s been characterized by [Army Secretary Mark Esper](#), the smallest component of the Army has strained to meet the demands of initiatives to grow a bigger, more lethal force.

But the chief of the [Army Reserve](#) is confident his organization will rise to the occasion, he told Army Times on Tuesday in Washington, D.C.

“We’re doing better now than we were four or five months ago,”

Lt. Gen. Charles Luckey said, in terms of the manning challenges that have kept the Reserve below its authorized end strength.

While the total Army missed its [accessions goals](#) in fiscal year 2018, it was the second year in a row for the Reserve.

Officials have attributed some of that struggle directly to success in growing the active component, because when the Army is wide open for business, fewer soldiers go Reserve.

“The trend over the years — and this is anecdotal, but I think it’s fair — has been, in many cases, the Army Reserve captures its talent coming off of active duty,” Luckey said.

During the pre-2017 drawdown, soldiers who were forced out could shore up the Reserve’s ranks. But since end strength has been climbing, reenlistment bonuses have gotten generous, and a standing “call to active duty” has encouraged Reserve soldiers to make the jump.

“As you try to grow the active force — to the extent that part of how you grow the active force is by keeping soldiers on active duty — it just creates an additional tension point,” Luckey said.

But things appear to be leveling off. The active component jumped by 26,000 soldiers in 2017, but since, growth has come in smaller increments. And this year, the active’s accessions goal is about 10,000 less than the previous year.

“From an accessions perspective, we’re doing okay,” Luckey said, adding that the most recent figures are single digits away from the current target. “From a retention perspective, we’re actually doing better than we have in years.”

Reenlistment bonuses have helped, he said, and the Reserve is at its highest retention rate in 18 years, he added.

“I’m very encouraged by the trend lines, as far as our accessions go,” he said.

He’s also excited about the prospect of an app the Reserve is developing, he said, that will allow soldiers to fulfill the call to action Esper issued in October: That they’re all recruiters.

<https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/01/29/army-reserve-chief-manning-fitness-test-challenges-are-under-control/>

Most active-duty soldiers are stationed at large installations, where the surrounding communities are familiar with the benefits and drawbacks of service.

But for reservists, who are about 200,000 strong and spread out all over the country, they might be some of the only soldiers a suburban teenager on the West Coast, for example, ever meets in real life.

With the app, called Double Eagle, if a soldier is out running around town and ends up having a conversation about enlisting with a neighbor or new acquaintance, they can take down that prospective soldier's information and send it to U.S. Army Recruiting Command.

“So now that lead has been essentially vetted by at least one soldier, putting eyes on that potential candidate,” Luckey said.

ACFT or bust

Meanwhile, the Army is completely overhauling its fitness standards. The Army Combat Fitness Test is in its pilot phase right now, with a few dozen battalions training their soldiers on the new events and running practice tests.

Since the Center for Initial Military Training unveiled the test in July, reservists have voiced concerns about spending limited time on drill weekends training for it and the feasibility of issuing the equipment to every one of more than 800 reserve centers spread throughout the county, as well as access to gyms in rural areas so soldiers can prepare on their own time.

“That scale, it becomes a challenge, in terms of time management,” Luckey said.

Rather than issuing equipment to units, he said, it will be issued to locations, and units will have to coordinate who uses it when.

“This is a good thing, and this breaks down functional, artificial barriers that have existed in the Reserve for a long time,” he said.

During the pilot, the test battalions' feedback will inform not only standards, but when the test becomes fully operational. Luckey will also be giving his feedback to the Army chief of staff.

The pilot program ends in September, and after that, Army leadership has until October 2020 to set a date that the ACFT becomes the test of record.

“I will give him my best assessment of when I think it's, I'll just say the word fair — I know that's a little bit loaded — but fair to execute this at scale as a test of record to decide whether, you know, this soldier can or cannot go to school, can or cannot get promoted,” Luckey said. “We want to make sure that we really give ourselves time to kick the tires on this.”

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SEE ALSO:

[Army 3-Star: Reserve May Not Be Ready for New Fitness Test by 2020](#) [2019-01-29]

<https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/your-marine-corps/2019/01/31/boot-camp-casualty-the-story-inside-one-recruits-mysterious-death-that-triggered-big-boot-camp-changes/>

Boot Camp Casualty: The story inside one recruit's mysterious death that triggered big changes

By Shawn Snow

Marine Corps Times, January 31, 2019



Patrick Vega's sudden death from cardiac arrest while at the San Diego, California, recruit depot triggered an investigation and now a whirlwind of changes across recruit training. (Lance Cpl. Jesula Jeanlouis/Marine Corps)

“The Marine Corps will either make you, break you or kill you,” Manny Vega had told his son, Patrick.

That conversation now haunts the former Marine scout sniper.

[Patrick Vega](#) appeared to be a healthy 21-year-old when he shipped off for [recruit training](#).

He enjoyed hiking and swimming, and had worked as a lifeguard. His mother and father, Amy and Manny, both described him as very fit, easy going and well-liked.

But Patrick Vega's [sudden death](#) from cardiac arrest while at the San Diego, California, recruit depot - triggered an investigation and now a whirlwind of [changes across recruit training](#).

During his roughly 11 days at the recruit depot, Vega's health had slowly deteriorated under the eyes of everyone.

On his final night aboard the Marine recruit depot, March 23, 2018, wandering recruits on guard duty - described the young recruit as being delirious, talking in his sleep, feeling cold and vomiting, according to details laid out in a command investigation obtained by Marine Corps Times via a Freedom of Information Act request.

Just before midnight, Vega's pulse stopped.

Recruits on watch later detailed to investigators that his chest was no longer rising.

A drill instructor on duty that night was alerted immediately and performed CPR until first responders arrived on scene in mere minutes.

Vega was rushed to Naval Medical Center San Diego where he remained on life support for nearly 35 hours.

Medical practitioners listed the cause of death as cardiac arrest, but no other details or potential underlying medical issues were found in the course of the investigation.

An autopsy was not performed, due to his parents' request. His father cited his knowledge of autopsy - procedures from a lifelong career as a policeman as the reason against it.

“I know what killed my son,” Manny Vega told Marine Corps Times in an exclusive interview.

“The Marine Corps failed my son, and failed me completely,” he said. “The Marine Corps dropped the - f*cking ball, negligence, ignorance, and just the gung-ho spirit that killed my son.”

Vega's sudden boot camp death remains a medical mystery.

<https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/your-marine-corps/2019/01/31/boot-camp-casualty-the-story-inside-one-recruits-mysterious-death-that-triggered-big-boot-camp-changes/>

But details in the command investigation underscore a young man who struggled immensely to meet basic Marine Corps fitness standards just to ship to the recruit depot.

Following his dream



Patrick Vega, pictured here with his parents and sister, enjoyed hiking and swimming. (Vega Family)

It was Patrick Vega's dream to follow in his father's footsteps.

Manny Vega had been a former Marine scout sniper who had earned the Corps' highest award for noncombat bravery, the Navy and Marine Corps Medal, for trying to rescue people trapped in the deadly 1989 South Korea CH-53 crash that claimed the lives of 22 Marines.

The 21-year-old son, a native of Oxnard, California, had been recruited out the Ventura recruiting substation.

But he struggled for over a year to pass the Corps' initial strength test, or IST — a fitness test required before potential recruits can ship to boot camp.

Vega failed the test at least 12 times, always on the run portion.

From July 2016 until May 2017, Vega failed the IST 11 times and eventually was booted from the Delayed Entry Program, or DEP, in June 2017.

He rejoined the DEP that October and failed the IST again in November.

Vega finally passed in both January and February 2018, with a passing run time of 12 minutes 51 seconds — just faster than the 13 minutes and 30 seconds maximum.

The test is a modified form of the physical fitness test required of Marines annually. Marine recruits also have to do pullups or pushups and crunches on the IST.

Vega's final passing score on the IST finally heralded his entry into recruit training in March 2018.

But, Vega's father says he's skeptical about his son's sudden passing score.

He told Marine Corps Times that he asked the recruiting station if the scores were fudged in order to ship his son to boot camp.

"He was a number to make mission," Manny Vega said.

The recruiters have a responsibility to ensure they send qualified and capable people to the Corps, he added. Manny Vega himself did a short stint as a Marine recruiter before leaving the Corps in 1992.

It is not uncommon for future Marine recruits to struggle on the physical requirements to attend boot camp. For many, the IST is the hardest obstacle to overcome, as unlike other discrepancies that can be addressed with a waiver, potential recruits need to muster their own motivation to improve their fitness.

Many recruits have been known not show significant fitness progress until their ship date inches closer.

Marine Corps Times has learned that the Ventura recruiting substation is confident that it is executing its IST properly.

Moreover, a Marine assigned to the Ventura recruiting station described Vega's fitness struggles to investigators.

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Patrick Vega “demonstrated that he truly wanted to be a Marine,” reads a statement from the Marine at the recruiting station and included in the investigation.

“Vega’s involvement with our PT [physical training] and pool functions was sporadic. When he ran an IST he did fine with the crunches and pullups, but struggled with his run,” the statement said. “He knew that he was not within the physical standards to go to boot camp and was not making much of an effort to get himself ready or allow us to train with him or teach him different techniques to improve his performance on the run.”

The recruiting station noted Vega turned things around and emphasized his fitness the closer he got to his boot camp ship date.

But the question as to why a seemingly healthy and active young man struggled so hard to run a mile and half.

His mother and father both say that running just wasn’t Patrick’s thing, but that he trained and tried to prepare himself.

Manny Vega also said he didn’t want to get into his son’s adult business and micromanage his life.

A Military Entrance Processing Station, or MEPS, in Los Angeles cleared Vega as fit for duty for service in the military, finding no serious medical conditions.

The MEPS medical exam noted that Vega suffered from only 10 percent scoliosis of the lumbar spine, bronchitis from months earlier, surgery for a hernia when he was seven, pectus carinatum or pigeon chest, and the inability to do the duck walk.

The duck walk during the medical exam tests future military recruits for various mobility issues or knee injuries.

Still, the MEPS station ultimately cleared Vega as fit. The medical processing team at the recruit depot also found no serious medical ailments that could preclude Vega from military service.

An official at Marine Corps Recruiting Command told Marine Corps Times that Vega did not have a medical waiver to enlist in the Corps.

Vega stepped on the famous yellow footsteps at the San Diego recruit depot on March 12, 2018. That moment forward, his life and his health drastically deteriorated.

Failing runs

On March 16, 2018, the young recruit failed the IST while assigned to a boot camp receiving company. He scored a run time of 15 minutes, 3 seconds — more than two minutes slower than the score he achieved just a month prior.

Because of his poor performance on the IST, Vega was dropped to a physical conditioning platoon, or PCP, a purgatory for recruits at boot camp suffering from medical ailments or those unable to pass various physical standards.

PCP affords recruits time to condition themselves to be successful in training, but it also halts forward progress at boot camp until the Corps’ standards can be met.

On March 19, 2018, Vega failed the IST again while assigned to PCP.

He ran 1.5 miles in 17 minutes and 8 seconds — running two minutes slower than his test less than one week prior.

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It was his worst ever showing on the IST.

On March 20, 2018, Vega showed his first signs of medical distress.

Drill instructors at a chow hall witnessed Vega vomit onto his food tray. From March 20-24 Vega would be seen vomiting eight to 10 times by various drill instructors and recruits.

As Vega showed signs of a potential illness, drill instructors routinely followed up with the young recruit, according to the command investigation, always affording him the opportunity to seek medical attention.

On March 21, Vega checked into sick call where a physician ultimately diagnosed him with an upper respiratory infection. He was prescribed Mucinex, Tylenol, lozenges for a sore throat, and Zofran for vomiting. He was also told to hydrate more.

Vega was given the option to go on light duty or to return to full duty. He chose full duty, citing his desire to get out of PCP.

On March 23, Vega attended an exercise training session with his PCP unit, which consisted of a few laps around a track. Vega was only able to complete a lap, which alerted officials supervising fitness training.

The young recruit complained that his throat was dry and that he felt like he was going to pass out. A corpsman on scene told Vega to sit out the rest of the physical training.

Throughout the rest of the day, Vega appeared tired, woozy and had trouble standing on his own at evening chow, witnesses said.

Vega was asked if he wanted to go to the hospital or sick call in the morning. He said he was not feeling sick enough to go to the hospital.

Company and platoon staff were told to keep an eye on Vega's condition.

Around 7 p.m. that night, recruits on roving guard duty or fire watch were informed to keep watch of Vega and inform the drill instructor immediately if anything seemed strange.

That night would be Vega's last at the recruit depot.

The recruits on fire watch detailed to investigators and in duty log books Vega's delirious state and worsening condition throughout the evening.

Recruits said Vega would mumble in his sleep and sometimes would shout "recruit Vega, recruit Vega."

He even attempted to get dressed in a hurry, appeared confused and complained of being cold.

For anyone who has ever gone through the stress of Marine Corps recruit training, talking in one's sleep or sleep walking is a fairly common sight in a boot camp squad bay. It may not have been seen as necessarily out of the norm.

But Vega's father told Marine Corps Times that he spoke with the recruits on guard duty that night, and they told him they were well aware of Vega's poor health.

Around 11:53 p.m. on March 23, a recruit noted Vega's chest wasn't rising and that he had no pulse.

At 11:55 p.m., a drill instructor was informed and CPR was commenced.

Just after midnight, Fed Fire emergency services received the call and arrived on scene by 12:07 a.m.

Vega was transported to a San Diego hospital where he was placed on life support for nearly 35 hours.

He was declared deceased from cardiac arrest.

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Changes coming

The command investigation did not find fault with anyone with Vega's death.

According to the investigation's findings, no single drill instructor witnessed all of Vega's ailments or moments of vomiting and could not be held responsible.

Staff and drill instructors were trained in CPR and acted appropriately, according to the investigation.

However, some blame was laid at the feet of a series commander.

The investigation said the series commander "was in the best position, and had the responsibility for, comprehensive knowledge of recruit Vega's medical status."

A series commander is a relatively low-ranking officer between the rank of lieutenant to captain.

The investigation further stated that it "would have been prudent" for the series commander to activate emergency medical services instead of waiting for sick call the next day.

The series commander was removed from their duties supervising recruits at the depot.

While the investigation really didn't fault any single person, the recruit depots are about to undergo some serious changes to help mitigate the chance of a death like this ever occurring again.

The depots plan to increase the number of medical drills within the Special Training Company to boost effectiveness and responsiveness of medical treatment.

The investigation noted that at a minimum STC personnel should perform monthly drills and continue to provide annual certifications. It also noted that personnel who performed CPR on Vega did so admirably.

Automated external defibrillators will be placed in the squad bays and posters will be displayed in the squad bays identifying criteria for recruits to notify their drill instructor of a medical emergency. An AED on site in the squad bay could speed up reaction time of a suspected medical emergencies.

The medical clinics will also evaluate any recruiting who fails the run portion of the IST. The investigation noted that a medical screening for failures on other portions of the IST were not necessary unless a medical reason was suspected.

"We understand that supervision is the key to proper execution and safe conduct of training," Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego told Marine Corps Times in an emailed statement. "We believe these actions have increased emphasis on already close communication and coordination with Federal Fire (first responder) assets on board the installation.

So what the hell happened to Vega?

Because an autopsy was not performed, any possible underlying medical issues never were found.

"In one of the most controlled environments that exist in the world ... and you have a healthy young man die of dehydration, basically — how ... is that possible," Manny Vega said.

But the investigation provided some speculation.

Patrick Vega may have discontinued his use of the prescribed medication Zofran, which helps with nausea and vomiting.

His continued vomiting on the March 23, could have resulted in his cardiac arrest.

"This remains only speculation," the investigation reads.

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His thorough medical examinations found no evidence of pneumonia or a serious viral infection that could lead to myocarditis, or a swelling of the heart from a viral infection, the investigation explained.

“The possibility of an unknown preexisting medical condition also remains,” the report stated.

The MEPS station and medical staff aboard the recruit depot “detected no pre-existing abnormalities aside from his pectus carinatum and minor scoliosis, NBHC medical officer staff stated that not all cardio or pulmonary abnormalities are detected during military entrance screening,” the investigation reads.

The investigation further speculated that Vega’s constant vomiting could have triggered pulmonary aspiration and triggered his cardiac arrest.

“While the circumstances make it impossible for us to learn what caused Pvt Vega to suffer cardiac arrest, we must strive to learn from this event and do all we can to prevent such a tragedy from occurring in the future,” the investigation reads.

“To that end, this investigation will be the subject of a recurring professional military education class at the Recruit Training Regiment military education class at the Recruit Training Regiment designed to train company personnel to recognize and respond to after-hours medical emergencies,” the investigation added.

House panel takes aim at legal roadblock to military malpractice lawsuits

By Leo Shane III

Military Times, January 25, 2019



The Supreme Court building is seen at dawn in September 2018. A House panel this session is planning to look into fixes for a legal precedent — upheld by the Supreme Court multiple times — that limits troops and military families from suing the Defense Department for malpractice and negligence. (Patrick Semansky/AP)

WASHINGTON — A key House Democrat is targeting legislative fixes to [the Feres Doctrine](#) as a top priority this session, taking aim at the legal precedent critics say [unfairly blocks troops from suing the military](#) for medical malpractice, supervisor negligence and a host of other on-duty mistakes.

Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif. and the new chairwoman of the [House Armed Services](#) personnel subcommittee, listed the legal issue among her areas of focus in her first statement in the new leadership role.

In her statement, she said the panel's guiding focus will be to tackle "critical issues that impact not only our service members but their families who also bear the burden of sacrifice and commitment to our country."

Those include potential new rules for response and prosecution of sexual assault cases in the military — a topic for which Speier has been a vocal advocate for years — as well as reviewing rules for transgender enlistment, improving data usage in military recruiting and retention, and monitoring troops' pay and benefits.

But the Feres Doctrine debate could lead to some of the most dramatic military policy changes to come out of Congress this year. Speier has been following a handful of court challenges to the legal precedent in recent months, and is planning a hearing on the issue early this session.

The 1950 Supreme Court decision — which ruled the family of an active-duty soldier killed in a barracks fire could not sue the government — has been cited repeatedly by lower courts to block troops from claiming damages for actions related to military service.

Defense officials have argued that breaking the precedent would prompt a flood of frivolous lawsuits. But critics say the courts have gone well beyond the idea of preventing troops from suing for war-related injuries or on-duty accidents, and deprived military families of compensation for negligence.

Last fall, the case of Sgt. 1st Class Richard Stayskal drew national attention to the topic again. A misdiagnosis by Army doctors in early 2017 allowed his lung cancer to worsen and spread, leaving him with just months to live.

If civilian doctors had made the errors, his family would be able to file suit seeking damages. But because of the Feres Doctrine, the prospects of winning a similar judgment against the Army is nearly impossible.

Sean Cronin, whose Florida law firm Cronin & Maxwell specializes in military medical malpractice cases, said federal attorneys are quick to cite the Feres decision in any military litigation, creating a frustrating legal roadblock for a wide variety of lawsuits.

<https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2019/01/25/house-panel-takes-aim-at-legal-roadblock-to-military-malpractice-lawsuits/>

“And every time this has come before the U.S. Supreme Court, they have said the legislative branch can fix this if they want to,” he said. “It’s surprising it hasn’t been dealt with. We’ve had enough government changes over the last 30 years, and enough cases of the (precedent) being abused that we can see the need.”

Cronin said he believes amending the federal tort claims act to allow some military malpractice lawsuits won’t upend Defense Department operations. Cases that clearly fall within military orders and missions can be excluded, while non-combat mistakes that would be liable under civilian law are allowed.

“In a lot of these cases, there’s no reason that the Feres Doctrine should even apply,” he said. “It’s not an issue with the chain of command or getting in the way of appropriate order and discipline.”

Speier’s office has not released details on what legislative options she may have to deal with those cases. Hearings for the committee and its subcommittees are expected to begin in the next few weeks.

‘It wasn’t a fun place to work’: DoD’s cultural hurdles in attracting tech talent

By Mark Pomerleau

Defense News, January 28, 2019



Experts and former officials provided candid insights into the cultural hurdles that impede the DoD from attracting needed outside tech talent. (Todd Maki/U.S. Air Force)

The Pentagon has received poor marks from external observers for its apparent inability to court and attract the talent it needs to compete in a 21st century world against sophisticated nation-states and militant organizations.

In a telling example, Trae Stephens, co-founder and chairman of Anduril Industries and partner at Founders Fund, said during his three-year internship with the intelligence community, he saw employees leave for reasons unrelated to mission enjoyment.

“It was because they were stuck in a windowless basement without their cellphone, where they couldn’t communicate with their friends. They were closed off by a bureaucracy that was not merit-driven but tenure-driven. Their managers didn’t know anything about what they were doing, and when they did interfere or insert themselves, it was always negative and nasty,” Stephens said during a roundtable hosted by Defense News in California in November.

Stephens recalled that during his time in government, he used noise-canceling headphones. After a few days, Stephens said, his supervisor asked if the IT department provided a waiver for the headphones. Subsequently, Stephen’s waiver was denied and he had to turn to foam earplugs.

“It wasn’t a fun place to work,” he said.

According to Josh Marcuse, executive director of the Pentagon’s Defense Innovation Board, if the department wants to expand its competitive space, it must become technologically competitive.

“If you want to be a technological competitive organization, you have to become a place where technologically savvy people want to work,” he said during the roundtable. “If you can’t become a place for people that have the skills you need but want to work, then guess what? They won’t come to work for you. And that’s the end of the story.”

Instilling such a culture is key to recruiting for one forward-looking pilot program within the Air Force, located in a startup-type space in a Boston skyscraper.

“You’re not going to convince somebody who can get a job at Google or Wayfair or somewhere to come work for us unless you can offer them a fulfilling job in an environment where they want to be, with an open, collaborative workplace,” Adam Furtado, lab director for the Kessel Run Experimentation Lab, told Defense News in a December visit to the facility.

Kessel Run seeks to change how the Air Force — and by extension, the Department of Defense — develops and delivers software based on best practices from industry.

“We’re battling industry — especially in Boston — for top-end tech talent,” Furtado said. “You can’t ask people to: ‘Hey, come and take a \$30,000 pay cut; also it’s going to be a bad environment and you’re not going to be happy here.’ ”

<https://www.defensenews.com/smr/cultural-clash/2019/01/28/it-wasnt-a-fun-place-to-work-dods-cultural-hurdles-in-attracting-tech-talent/>

But money isn't always the problem. Marcuse believes many limiting factors in attracting talent for the DoD are out of the department's control.

For example, he said, will a career change be worth it? Are there opportunities to make meaningful change, or is bureaucracy too impervious to progress?

If the DoD could address these concerns, he said, people would be lined up around the block.

SEE ALSO:

[Video: The growing threat of the Pentagon- Silicon Valley culture gap](#) [*Defense News*, 2019-01-28]

[Video: Is there a culture gap between the military and big tech?](#) [*Defense News*, 2019-01-28]

[Video: Why is there a problem getting the latest tech from Silicon Valley deployed with the military?](#) [*Defense News*, 2019-01-28]

[For tech all-stars, working at the Pentagon can be a career killer](#) [*Defense News*, 2019-01-28]

[Cultural divide: Can the Pentagon crack Silicon Valley?](#) [*Defense News*, 2019-01-28]

[How the Pentagon's fear of risk is stifling innovation](#) [*Defense News*, 2019-01-28]

[Can the Pentagon convince Silicon Valley to move beyond walled gardens?](#) [*C4isrnet*, 2019-01-28]

[Dear Google, please help your country defend itself](#) [*Defense News*, 2019-01-28]

New Army leave policy more flexible after childbirth, gives three weeks off to fathers

By Meghann Myers

Army Times, January 28, 2019



Sgt. Kristian Myrick meets his 3-month-old daughter, Amelia, at a welcome home ceremony at Fort Carson, Colorado. The Army's new parental leave policy allows up to 21 days of leave for fathers, and can be taken within a year after returning from a deployment. (Spc. Marcus McKinney/Army)

[New parents](#) in the Army can take advantage of a revamped parental leave policy that went into effect in a Jan. 22 memo.

Getting the Army in line with [the rest of the services](#), the directive's language no longer automatically assumes that [postpartum mothers are primary caregivers](#), while more than doubling the amount of time off previously allowed for new fathers.

The new policy is retroactive to Dec. 23, 2016, according to the memo, so new parents who are still within eligibility windows could be entitled to more leave.

The most significant change separates what has traditionally been known as “maternity leave,” which increased to 12 weeks immediately after birth in 2016, into two categories: “maternity convalescent leave” and “primary caregiver leave.”

Now, the Army allows six weeks immediately after delivery for a woman to recover physically, then another six weeks she can take at any time within that first year. At the time same, the child's secondary caregiver can take three weeks of leave at any time during that first year as well. The previous policy allowed 10 days, and fathers, for example, had to take the leave within 45 days.

Those limits are extended if a soldier becomes a parent while deployed, and the clock begins when they return.

The reason convalescent and primary caregiver leave are separate, according to the policy, is that there are now allowances for unusual circumstances where a child's birth mother is not its primary caregiver. That could include death or illness of the birth mother, or another situation where she is not present for the child.

In that case, a soldier may file a request to become the child's primary caregiver and be eligible for up to six weeks of leave.

In the case of a legal adoption, soldiers will have to be designated a primary or secondary caregiver, and then request six or three weeks of leave accordingly.

Some other considerations:

- Female soldiers who give their children up for adoption are authorized six weeks convalescent leave only.
- Convalescent leave and caregiver leave cannot be used to extend terminal leave when a soldier is preparing to leave the Army.

<https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/01/28/new-army-leave-policy-more-flexible-after-childbirth-gives-three-weeks-off-to-fathers/>

- The new policy also applies to children of unmarried parents, but non-birth parent soldiers will have to provide proof that they are one of the child's caregivers. Previously, only married soldiers could take leave.



Arin Lassiter practices changing a diaper on a premature baby in an incubator during a Womack Army Medical Center Maternity Fair at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The Army published a new parental leave policy on Jan. 22. (Twana Atkinson/Army)

The new policy brings the Army in line with the other services, who updated their parental leave policies in June, per a 2016 Defense Department directive.

The Army offers the same 12 weeks to new mothers that all of the services have, but while the Army, Air Force and Coast Guard allow 21 days of secondary caregiver leave, the Navy and Marine Corps offer 14 days.

SEE ALSO:

[Army Doubles Parental Leave for Secondary Caregivers](#) [*Military.com*, 2019-01-25]

[With Paid Leave, Gates Foundation Says There Can Be Too Much of a Good Thing](#) [*The New York Times*, 2019-01-25]

Senate hearings to probe unsafe housing of U.S. military families

By Joshua Schneyer and M.B. Pell

Reuters, January 30, 2019



Swab tests at residences in Fort Benning, Georgia, U.S. reveal in red the presence of lead in this undated handout photo obtained by FOIA from the US Army, received by Reuters August 15, 2018. (U.S. Army FOIA/Handout via REUTERS)

NEW YORK - Troubled by widespread health and safety hazards uncovered by a Reuters investigation into U.S. military housing, Congress will hold hearings next month to ensure that “what we’re seeing now can never happen again,” said Michigan Democrat Gary Peters, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

During the hearings, tentatively scheduled for Feb. 13, lawmakers will question the Department of Defense and private contractors who house thousands of U.S. military families on bases across the country, according to Senate staff familiar with the plans.

U.S. senators said the news articles and mounting complaints from military families demonstrate a need for immediate oversight.

Congress must do “all that we can ensure that no soldier, airman, sailor, Marine or their families have to worry about the safety of their homes,” Senator Thom Tillis, Republican of North Carolina, said in a statement. His state is home to Fort Bragg, where families have signed a petition demanding improvements by their [private landlord](#).

The hearings mark a growing bipartisan commitment from Congress to ensure the safety of 700,000 service members, spouses and children who live in homes operated by private companies on bases in partnerships with the Department of Defense.

“We look forward to engaging with Congress through productive discussions on privatized housing,” said Department of Defense spokeswoman Heather Babb.

The hearings come in response to a Reuters series that revealed a dark side of the U.S. Military Housing Privatization Initiative, the largest-ever corporate takeover of federal housing. Two decades ago, the Defense Department began turning over most family housing on U.S. bases to private companies to manage in an effort to improve living conditions.

In some homes, however, [lead paint hazards](#) threaten children; [rampant mold](#) sickens others; ceilings leak or collapse into bedrooms, and rodents soil cribs and carpets. Even some [new homes](#) are riddled with defects, and the housing often isn’t accessible to state or county inspectors. Families have limited tenant rights and can be left penniless or powerless to challenge property managers in business with their military employers.

Behind the safety lapses are private landlords with iron-clad assurances of profit from Defense Department rent stipends. One of them stands to earn \$1 billion in fees from confidential Army housing contracts that last a half-century.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-military-congress/senate-hearings-to-probe-unsafe-housing-of-u-s-military-families-idUSKCN1PO37F>

The DOD has long maintained that the privatization program vastly improved housing on U.S. bases. But since Reuters began publishing its reports, military families have pressed Congress to hold the military and contractors accountable for home safety lapses.

“This is a long time coming,” said Janna Driver, an Air Force spouse whose children were sickened by household mold on a base in Oklahoma. “I think these articles are why these Congressional hearings are happening.”

More than 100 bases nationwide have privatized housing, leaving military branches with limited oversight. The program enlisted private firms to build and renovate homes and maintain high quality for the residents.

“If they aren’t getting it, we need to look at what the Department of Defense is doing to hold these contractors accountable,” said Republican James Inhofe of Oklahoma, the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Its ranking member, Democrat Jack Reed of Rhode Island, began calling for the housing hearings last month.

According to Inhofe, the Subcommittees on Personnel and Readiness will conduct the hearings. The scrutiny could help Congress consider legislative measures to boost safety and accountability in privatized on-base housing, Senate staff said.

Hearings represent the latest response to the Reuters reports. Measures announced earlier include a Government Accountability Office [examination](#) of base housing, an investigation by the Defense Department’s Inspector General, and a nationwide [inspection program](#) in Army homes for lead, mold and asbestos that could cost up to \$386 million.

The housing concerns have also mobilized other senators. Last week, California Democrat Dianne Feinstein sent letters to the Secretaries of the Navy and Air Force, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps, citing Reuters’ coverage and demanding contract documents for base housing in her state.

By Joshua Schneyer and M.B. Pell. Andrea Januta contributed reporting. Editing by Ronnie Greene.

Violence Against Women Act extended in bill that reopened government

By Elise Viebeck

The Washington Post, January 27, 2019



(Jonathan Newton/The Washington Post)

The Violence Against Women Act was extended through Feb. 15 as part of the continuing resolution Friday that reopened the government.

The landmark 1994 law [expired](#) in late December after multiple short-term extensions, a blow to lawmakers and activists who have sought a long-term reauthorization.

The government shutdown had also caused a delay in payments to VAWA-funded programs.

VAWA was enacted after Anita Hill's testimony against Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas over alleged sexual harassment and the 1992 "Year of the Woman," which brought a record number of women to the House and Senate. It lapsed less than three months after Christine Blasey Ford testified that then-Supreme Court nominee Brett M. Kavanaugh had sexually assaulted her when the two were in high school and after another election brought a wave of new female lawmakers to Capitol Hill.

Thomas and Kavanaugh denied the women's allegations, and both now serve on the Supreme Court.

Democrats have vowed to fight for a long-term reauthorization of the law during this Congress. House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) stated last week that he would work with Reps. Karen Bass (D-Calif.) and Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Texas) to finish the task.

Liberal advocacy groups withdrew support for Jackson Lee as the effort's leader because of a new lawsuit that [claims](#) she fired an aide who planned to sue a nonprofit Jackson Lee ran over an alleged sexual assault.

Jackson Lee has denied through her office that she retaliated against the woman.

Misconduct

Congressman Duncan Hunter turns up pressure on Navy in SEAL war crimes case

By Andrew Dyer

The San Diego Union-Tribune, January 31, 2019



Congressman Duncan Hunter leaves San Diego federal court in September. (Nelvin C. Cepeda / San Diego Union-Tribune)

Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Alpine, recently stepped up his advocacy for a Navy SEAL on trial for war crimes, including contacting military leaders with administrative and supervisory roles in the trial.

Wednesday Hunter also sent a letter to President Donald Trump, calling on him to remove from the Navy's hands the case of Chief Petty Officer Edward R. Gallagher, who is accused of stabbing to death a teen-age Iraqi combatant. Co-signing the letter was Florida Congressman Matt Gaetz, a Republican who represents the western panhandle region of that state.

The letter alleges political bias against Gallagher and repeats other claims about his confinement and access to attorneys, claims the Navy has [disputed](#).

The White House has not commented on the request.

Gallagher, a chief special warfare operator based in San Diego, was charged with several war crimes from a 2017 deployment to Mosul, Iraq.

Navy investigators say Gallagher killed a wounded teenage ISIS fighter brought to him for medical treatment. He also faces aggravated assault charges for allegedly shooting an elderly man and a little girl, and charges related to allegedly shooting indiscriminately at civilians during deployment.

Gallagher has denied all the allegations and pleaded not guilty.

Hunter recently leaned on Navy officials about the courthouse where Gallagher is being tried. Hunter's office said calls were made to ensure that Gallagher's supporters could attend the Navy SEAL's trial next month.

Gallagher's case has attracted a large number of supporters and more than 30 news media outlets, said Brian O'Rourke, a Navy spokesman.

The largest courtroom on Naval Base San Diego can accommodate only about 30 people. Once seating is reserved for Navy officials and those required by the prosecution and defense, there likely will not be enough seats for the public, he said.

They are planning to use a closed-circuit TV system for an audience in another courtroom, he said.

The issue came to a head at Gallagher's arraignment Jan. 4. Priority was given to 11 members of the news media, leaving only five seats available for the 35 or so Gallagher supporters, O'Rourke said.

That's when someone called Hunter.

"They were upset (the Navy) wasn't using the full capacity of the room," said Michael Harrison, a spokesman for Hunter. "To their credit, they fixed it that day — within 10 to 15 minutes."

Hunter's office called Navy officials, some of whom have a direct supervisory role in the court martial.

<https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/military/sd-me-hunter-navy-courthouse-20190123-story.html>
Hunter's staff called Capt. Meg Larrea, commanding officer of the region's legal service office, which is prosecuting Gallagher.

Another call went to Rear Adm. Yancy Lindsey, commander of Navy Region Southwest and the convening authority for Gallagher's court martial. The convening authority has the final say in going forward with prosecutions.

O'Rourke, who took that call, said he did not make the admiral available to the congressman's office.

The next business day after the arraignment hearing, Hunter visited Gallagher in the Miramar brig, where the SEAL has been held since Sept. 11. Hunter later sent a letter to Trump, asking for help getting Gallagher released, complaining about the brig's conditions.

A judge then ruled that Gallagher would remain behind bars throughout his trial.

That same day Hunter sent another letter, this time to Rear Adm. Collin Green, commander of Naval Special Warfare in Coronado, questioning why administration of the case was shifted from Naval Special Warfare to Navy Region Southwest.

Hunter, who faces his own felony charges for alleged campaign finance violations and wire fraud, is a Marine combat veteran who served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

He has issued press releases and appeared on a right-wing cable news channel, One America News, to talk about Gallagher's case.

"U.S. military lawyers have a culture that values collecting scalps from war-fighters," Hunter said on a Jan. 17 show.

Hunter complained that the Miramar brig is for sex offenders.

"You shouldn't put anybody who's not a sex offender in with a bunch of really bad, disgusting people like that," Hunter said.

The Navy said brig conditions are within regulations and that its inmates are facing a variety of charges.

At least one expert in military trials said he is not surprised that Hunter is advocating for Gallagher. William Woodruff, a former Army JAG trial attorney and professor emeritus at the Norman Adrian Wiggins School of Law at Campbell University, said Hunter is within his rights to work on behalf of constituents.

"People can argue whether it's appropriate or inappropriate, but I don't see a legal issue," Woodruff said. "(It's) more political theater than anything else."

Gallagher, who previously lived in military housing in Point Loma, did not live in Hunter's district.

It would be different, Woodruff said, if President Trump involves himself in the case. That would introduce issues of undue influence because, as Commander-in-Chief, Trump is at the top of the military chain of command.

"When the president gets involved, you start running into the unlawful command influence," he said. "No good would come of the president getting involved."

Contact Andrew Dyer via [email](#) or [Twitter](#).

Former Green Beret sentenced to 10 years in domestic abuse court-martial

By Meghann Myers

Army Times, January 30, 2019



Maj. Jason Sartori's court martial began Monday at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. (Army)

A [7th Special Forces Group](#) officer was sentenced to 10 years confinement and dismissal from the Army following a conviction on five counts of assault and two of child endangerment on Wednesday, a [1st Special Forces Command](#) spokeswoman

confirmed to Army Times.

[Maj. Jason Sartori](#)'s charges included strangling, battery and shoving his then-wife, as well as brandishing a loaded weapon in front of his young son and strangling his wife while she held their infant in her arms, according to his original charge sheet.

"Sartori has the right to present matters of appeal to the General Courts Martial Convening Authority, Maj. Gen. John Deedrick, a process that typically takes three to four months, after which there is an appeals process," Maj. Beth Riordan said in a statement.

Sartori faced a sixth assault charge for grabbing his wife by the wrists, but the presiding judge found insufficient evidence.

The incidents took place between August 2015 and April 2016, according to the charges. In May 2016, Sartori also spent two weeks in an Okaloosa County, Florida, jail on civilian domestic abuse charges stemming from the same incidents, which were eventually dropped.

The Sartoris' divorce was finalized in March 2017.

The attacks came to light in September 2016, when 7th Special Forces Group opened a 15-6 investigation into allegations of adulterous and inappropriate relationships by Sartori with both soldiers and civilians, which were substantiated by the investigating officer.

A subsequent Army Criminal Investigation Command report substantiated the allegations of abuse against his then-wife, as well as two more women who admitted to having affairs with Sartori. A convening authority declined to pursue criminal charges on those allegations.

SEE ALSO:

[The startling toll on children who witness domestic violence is just now being understood](#) [USA TODAY, 2019-01-29]

[Special Forces officer heading to trial on domestic abuse, child endangerment charges](#) [Army Times, 2019-01-25]

Fort Bragg soldiers face federal charges in sham marriage scheme

By Meghann Myers

Army Times, January 29, 2019



Three Fort Bragg soldiers are involved in a sham marriage scheme involving legal residency fraud, according to court documents. (Getty Images)

Three Fort Bragg soldiers have been implicated in a [scam](#) to marry female soldiers off to [immigrants](#) and exchange legal residency for cash and benefits.

Sgt. Edward Anguah has been remanded into federal custody until a Jan. 31 hearing, according to court documents, while arrest warrants have been issued for Spc. Ahmid Mohammed-Murtadaas and two Ghanaian nationals for their role in the [scheme](#).

“We take allegations of misconduct seriously and it is important for everyone on our team to live and demonstrate the Army Values every day,” Lt. Col. Michael Burns, XVIII Airborne Corps spokesman, told Army Times on Monday.

Anguah faces charges of marriage fraud, aiding and abetting, and fraud and misuse of visas, according to a federal complaint filed Jan. 24.

The arrangement came to light in late 2018, after Pvt. Endasia East, who is assigned to 1st Battalion, 7th Air Defense Artillery Regiment at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, came under Army criminal investigation for having a sexual relationship with a single soldier, according to the complaint.

East had been married to a Ghanaian citizen, Sulemana Ibrahim, since July 24. But the marriage was a business arrangement, she told investigators, wherein she was paid to marry him in exchange for sponsoring his legal residency in the U.S.

Army Criminal Investigation Command referred the case to the Homeland Security Department, who first interviewed East on Dec. 27.

East met Ibrahim through Mohammed-Murtadaas, himself a naturalized citizen from Ghana, an automated logistical specialist in her unit.

Mohammed-Murtadaas proposed that she marry Ibrahim, who was living in New York at the time, according to the affidavit.

In return she would get to keep the basic allowance for housing she would be entitled to because of the marriage, as well as \$1,250 to cover two months' rent at her apartment and an additional, unknown amount to furnish it, according to court documents.

Records indicate that Ibrahim visited Fort Bragg on July 23, when the couple were first introduced, five days before his tourist visa expired.

The following day, Ibrahim, East and Mohammed went to the Cumberland County courthouse to make it official, along with a witness named in the complaint only as “D.M.”

<https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/01/29/fort-bragg-soldiers-face-federal-charges-in-sham-marriage-scheme/>



Three Fort Bragg soldiers are part of a federal investigation into a sham marriage scheme. (Army)

That evening, she told the investigator, they were joined for dinner by Anguah, known as the “facilitator,” who would help them navigate the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service paperwork for legal residency.

Anguah is a culinary specialist at 3rd Expeditionary Command, Burns told Army Times.

“Pvt. East stated during their conversation, Sgt. Anguah made it clear that he had arranged a number of other sham marriages and was well versed with the USCIS paperwork required from both the soldier and spouses and the alien,” according to the complaint.

The three men told East she would have to stage photos with Ibrahim, she told the investigator, to make it look like they were in a real relationship. She also gave Anguah copies of her birth certificate and tax documents, then met up with him to practice going over questions that immigration authorities would ask to authenticate the marriage.

And once she moved out of the barracks, according to the complaint, Anguah and Ibrahim were upset that she could not get Ibrahim’s name put on her apartment lease because he didn’t have a social security number and couldn’t complete a background check.

They also wanted Ibrahim’s name on her next-of-kin documents and on her Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance, she said, to make everything look legitimate.

“East stated she placed Ibrahim on her Record of Emergency Data, but placed her brother as the sole recipient of her life insurance payout, citing she was not going to award Ibrahim any money in the event of her death,” according to the complaint.

Anguah also asked her to find more soldiers who would be interested in the scheme, she said. On Jan. 11, Homeland Security sent an undercover agent to meet Anguah at a Starbucks near post.

They made a plan to head to the courthouse on Jan. 25 so she could marry another immigrant, Kawaphoom Hoomkwap.

Anguah said he would take a cut of the \$6,000 fee he had arranged, and that he would cover a wedding dress and a ring, discussing the plan in multiple recorded phone calls after the in-person meeting.

A federal judge issued a warrant for Anguah’s arrest on Jan. 24, and according to court documents, he was arrested on Monday.

“We are not at liberty to discuss any details pertaining to this case, as it is under investigation,” Burns said. “We are cooperating with local authorities and will provide any support required for the investigation.”

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SEE ALSO:

[Marriage Scam Paired Fort Bragg Soldiers with Immigrants, Feds Say](#) [*Military.com*, 2019-01-27]

Seven SEALs granted immunity in Iraq war crimes prosecutions

By Andrew Dyer

The San Diego Union-Tribune, January 25, 2019



Chief Special Warfare Operator Edward R. Gallagher. (Courtesy photo)

New details in the case against a Navy SEAL charged with [multiple war crimes](#) emerged Friday during a marathon motion hearing at Naval Base San Diego.

The hearing revealed that seven Navy SEALs have been granted immunity to testify for the prosecution during the upcoming trial of Edward R. Gallagher, a chief special warfare operator alleged to have murdered a wounded teenage ISIS combatant by stabbing him in the neck.

The trial phase is scheduled for Feb. 19. Prosecutors expect to call the seven SEALs and up to 13 additional witnesses of the May 2017 incident in Mosul, Iraq.

Defense attorneys asked the judge, Navy Capt. Aaron Rugh, to suppress some aspects of those witnesses' expected testimony, particularly the numbers of people Gallagher allegedly bragged about killing.

Witnesses told NCIS investigators that Gallagher bragged about killing up to 200 people during the 2017 deployment. Another witness said Gallagher told him he killed "three a day" and to "do the math" for the total number he killed.

The defense argued that these figures would prejudice a jury panel. The judge denied the motion.

Defense attorneys also asked that evidence seized from three of Gallagher's cell phones be suppressed. All evidence in the case is under a protective order, but photos, videos and text messages are part of the government's case against the SEAL.

Gallagher took the stand and testified that when he was arrested on Sept. 11, he was not allowed to call his attorney. NCIS interrogators asked him to use his fingerprints to unlock his phone, he said, and investigators watched Gallagher enter his pass code, which they then used to unlock his other devices.

The judge had not ruled on that motion as of late Friday evening.

Prosecutors also revealed they have a knife recovered from Naval Special Warfare Group 1 in Coronado and that it tested positive for DNA. They did not say whose DNA or that it was the murder weapon, though it was undergoing further testing.

More details about the battle that precipitated that alleged murder also came to light.

Prosecutors said the incident began May 3, 2017, with a drone strike and two Hellfire missiles hitting two sides of a home in Mosul.

Witness statements conflict about whether the injured ISIS fighter was inside the home when it was struck. The prosecution says he was, but the defense said their witnesses say he was injured by gunfire, not the drone strike.

Both sides agree, Iraqi forces loaded the combatant onto the hood of a Humvee and delivered him to Gallagher's team. Gallagher, a medic, began treating him.

<https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/military/sd-me-gallagher-war-crime-hearing20190125-story.html>
Prosecutors say Gallagher stabbed the fighter, estimated to be between 15 and 17 years old. Gallagher also is accused of posing for photos with the corpse, operating a drone over it and, sometime later, celebrating his reenlistment next to it.

The defense, which consisted of six lawyers Friday, said their witnesses will testify that the fighter was either already mortally wounded when he was brought to Gallagher or he was alive when Gallagher left the scene.

There was at least one witness who said the fighter's injuries were not that serious before Gallagher treated him.

In unrelated incidents, Gallagher is charged with shooting two civilians — an old man and a little girl — and with shooting indiscriminately at civilians throughout his deployment.

One witness told investigators Gallagher told him it was “OK to shoot at women.”

Information leaks have been an issue in this case. The judge reimposed a protective order after the prosecution complained that a leak to the Navy Times led to [publication](#) of an NCIS agent's name; the agent had to be pulled from the field.

“Neither side is supposed to try their case in the media,” said Commander Chris Czaplak, the Navy's lead prosecutor.

It was unclear when the judge will rule on other motions in the case.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/these-marines-were-falsely-accused-of-war-crimes-twelve-years-later-they-have-vindication/2019/01/31/4fa98b9c-1386-11e9-b6ad-9cfd62dbb0a8_story.html

These Marines were falsely accused of war crimes. Twelve years later, they have vindication.

By Andrew deGrandpre

The Washington Post, January 31, 2019



Retired Maj. Fred Galvin, pictured at his home in Honolulu, fought unproven allegations that members of the elite commando force he led in Afghanistan gunned down unarmed bystanders after an ambush. (Marie Eriel S. Hobro/For The Washington Post)

A Marine veteran who fought the Pentagon for 12 years over a war-crimes case brought against him and six others will have his permanent record wiped clean, an extraordinary affirmation of his claim that their reputations were destroyed by the military's effort

to imprison the men.

The Marines were members of an elite commando force expelled from Afghanistan in 2007 amid [unproven allegations](#) that they massacred innocent bystanders in the frantic minutes following an ambush. They were cleared of wrongdoing more than a year later, after the case was heard by a military court, but have maintained that senior leaders did little to set the record straight and, consequently, fostered the stigma that has dogged them ever since.

A report approved in January by the Navy Department is a major victory for retired Maj. Fred Galvin, the Marines' commanding officer. Its conclusions, he says, are a rebuke of those who condemned his men before the facts were clear, the investigator whose work was shown in court to be [sloppy](#) and the generals who refused Galvin's pleas for public absolution.

In its ruling, the Board for Correction of Naval Records said Galvin, 49, should be considered for a retroactive promotion. If granted, he would be entitled to hundreds of thousands of dollars in back salary and future government pension benefits, as he was forced to retire in 2014 after his superiors relied on "inequitable and unjust" performance appraisals, the report states, to prevent him from advancing in rank. Of the seven swept up in the case, Galvin is the only one to pursue such vindication.

More broadly, the board's determination closes one of the Afghanistan war's darkest chapters, an episode that unleashed international outrage only to be proved a fabrication engineered by the Taliban to fuel distrust of the U.S. military. Those involved [fought for their lives that day](#) only to be denounced by senior officers who had an obligation to protect their presumption of innocence.

"This was a big betrayal," said Steve Morgan, a retired Marine officer and decorated combat veteran who in 2008 was part of the court panel that found Galvin's Marines acted honorably on the battlefield. The panel also memorialized the failures committed by the Marines' superiors during and after the investigation.

"Fred has finally come out on the right side of things, but it has come at a very steep price," Morgan added. "The lies. The deceit. That makes me so mad. That kind of behavior doesn't inspire confidence in the ethics of our military's leaders. It corrodes public trust in the institution."

[\[69 Afghans' families get a U.S. apology\]](#)

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/these-marines-were-falsely-accused-of-war-crimes-twelve-years-later-they-have-vindication/2019/01/31/4fa98b9c-1386-11e9-b6ad-9cfd62dbb0a8_story.html

Galvin was the commanding officer of Marine Special Operations Company Fox. On March 4, 2007, as he and 29 others traveled in a six-vehicle convoy through the village of Bati Kot, a suicide bomber driving a van packed with explosives attacked the American vehicles and then fighters on both sides of the road opened fire. The Marines fought back and escaped with only one minor casualty.

But in the fight's immediate aftermath, images of bullet-riddled vehicles and ambulances loading bloodied Afghan men were transmitted worldwide. Accounts gathered at the scene portrayed the Marines as murderers, and allegations of wrongdoing were fueled by erroneous media coverage and a bogus narrative fostered by American military officials who fed false information to news outlets, the court's conclusions would later make clear.



From left, Lt. Col. Scott Jack, military counsel; Galvin, commander of Fox Company; and Mark Waple, civilian counsel, arrive for a court appearance at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina in January 2008. (Chuck Beckley/Associated Press)

Galvin harbors resentment for many, peers and superiors alike. “That 12-page report is an indictment,” he said. “It shows the decay of ethical and moral leadership in our military. And the people who did this to us got a free pass.”

Chief among his adversaries is John W. Nicholson Jr., who retired from the Army last year after ascending to the rank of four-star general and serving for 2 ¹ / ₂ years as the head of all NATO forces in Afghanistan. When the incident occurred, Nicholson was a colonel and brigade commander overseeing operations in the area, along the mountainous span of Afghanistan's border with Pakistan that was thought to be harboring al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.

Francis H. Kearney III, then a two-star Army general with purview of covert Special Operations activity in Afghanistan and throughout the Middle East, dispatched his chief of staff, Patrick Pihana, to investigate.

Independent assessments of [the casualty count varied widely](#). Amid widespread protests in Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, the country's president at the time, condemned the Marines. Hoping to contain the backlash, [Nicholson broadcast an apologetic statement](#) declaring the incident a “stain” on the U.S. military's honor.

Privately, officials were suspicious of the unit because of a separate incident involving Galvin's men in which, days after the ambush, they [deceived him and other leaders](#) to undertake a mission in an area declared off limits. Commanders in Afghanistan, still riled by the allegations of indiscriminate killing, pointed to the Marines' duplicity as evidence that Galvin had lost control of his unit. He was relieved of command and Fox Company was sent home.

The Navy review board sided with Galvin here, too, concluding that his superiors “grossly overreacted” and did not differentiate between the two incidents when ordering the Marines to leave.

Nicholson and Kearney, who retired as a three-star general in 2012, are not named in the new report. However, it makes clear that senior U.S. officials made “gross errors in judgment” leading up to Kearney's decision to eject the Marines from Afghanistan, and that along with the Taliban's deception, Army leaders were the “proximate causes” for inciting the chain of events that led to that decision.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/these-marines-were-falsely-accused-of-war-crimes-twelve-years-later-they-have-vindication/2019/01/31/4fa98b9c-1386-11e9-b6ad-9cfd62dbb0a8_story.html

The report's harshest language is directed at Pihana, whose investigation, it notes, was discredited in court years ago, in part because he was found to have suppressed evidence that supported the Marines' version of events — and was suspected by the court of having been influenced by Kearney, his direct superior.

“The magnitude of his errors,” the report says, “cannot be overstated.” Pihana's conclusion — that Galvin and the others should be charged with negligent homicide or dereliction of duty — is “explicable only as gross negligence or a mission with a predetermined outcome,” the report says.

Neither Nicholson, Kearney nor Pihana responded to requests for comment.

Morgan has urged members of Congress to push the Pentagon to reexamine whether Nicholson, Kearney or Pihana violated military regulations or laws in their pursuit of a criminal case and, if so, to hold them accountable.

“Nicholson and Kearney perpetuated the myth these Marines did bad things, and they've done nothing to set the record straight,” Morgan told The Washington Post. “I've got no time for those guys.”

In 2015, [when Military Times reexamined this case](#) in a multipart series, Kearney said he ordered the investigation at the Marine Corps' request because, he recalled, there was pressure on the military to demonstrate accountability in light of two unrelated war-crimes cases involving U.S. personnel in Iraq. “If these Marines have heartburn,” he said, “it should be with the Marine Corps.”

It was Jim Mattis, a revered Marine general and recently departed defense secretary, who convened the tribunal that ultimately determined that none of the Marines should be charged. The hearings spanned three weeks in January 2008. Four months later, [at the outset of Memorial Day weekend](#), Mattis's successor, having assessed the court's findings, issued a brief statement affirming that Galvin's men had “acted appropriately.”

[\[No charges for two Marines in deaths of Afghans\]](#)

That phrase still bothers the Marines, who say it was not a firm enough declaration of their innocence, and that it has been misinterpreted inside and outside the military to mean “we got away with murder,” Galvin said. He also questions the announcement's timing, calling it a deliberate move to bury the story. As a consequence, those assigned to the unit were ostracized.

“Sometimes now, when I reflect on it, I think that if this didn't happen, I'd be four years from retirement. I could have stayed in and made that my career,” said one of the Marines who was falsely accused and left the military voluntarily in 2008, when his contract expired. He spoke on the condition of anonymity, citing lingering concerns about retaliation.

“This devastated my life — my family, my legal expenses, being separated from the Marine Corps, not knowing if one day someone was going to knock on my door and take me to Fort Leavenworth,” he added, referring to the Army post in northeast Kansas that is home to the military's only supermax prison.

The stress — and the shame — has been a burden on all of them, leading to substance abuse, divorce and thoughts of suicide in some cases, Galvin said.

As their former commanding officer, Galvin has continued to press Marine Corps headquarters to do more to set the record straight. Beginning in 2015, with support from five members of Congress, multiple entreaties have been made to the service's most senior officer: first, to Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr., who became chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff later that year, and then to Dunford's successor, Gen. Robert B. Neller.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/these-marines-were-falsely-accused-of-war-crimes-twelve-years-later-they-have-vindication/2019/01/31/4fa98b9c-1386-11e9-b6ad-9cfd62dbb0a8_story.html

When approached by lawmakers, Dunford and Neller each declined to revisit the matter or make any public statements of support for the Fox Company Marines. In his correspondence to members of Congress, Dunford restated the court's findings from years prior, saying that neither Galvin nor his men faced any punitive measures. "Nor is there any adverse information in their military records associated with this incident," the general noted then, incorrectly.

[[Pentagon exonerates Marines blackballed by war-crimes case. They doubt the gesture is sincere.](#)]

Galvin grew hopeful when Neller announced in 2016 that he was making suicide prevention a signature focus of his term as the Marine Corps commandant. "We can't afford to lose a single Marine to anything, whether it be accident, injury or suicide," [Neller told Marine Corps Times then](#). "I can tell you — giving my solemn word — that the Marine Corps will try to help anyone who comes forward."

Last February, under pressure from Rep. Walter B. Jones (R-N.C.), Neller's staff director at the time, Maj. Gen. Frederick M. Padilla, pledged that the service would provide counseling and other assistance to Galvin and his men. "We are concerned to hear of the challenges many members of Fox Company are facing — which are, unfortunately, all too common among our combat veterans," [Padilla wrote to Jones](#). "I have asked the Commanding Officer of our Wounded Warrior Regiment to follow-up with these Marines to ensure they are receiving appropriate and all necessary care and support."

No one from the Marine Corps contacted them, Galvin said, until reading about Padilla's directive [in The Post](#) several weeks later.

At the Pentagon, Dunford and Neller have acknowledged the review board's determination. "General Dunford was pleased to learn about Maj. Galvin's exoneration and also appreciates his efforts to take care of the Marines from Fox Company," said Col. Patrick Ryder, a spokesman for the chairman.

Neller said: "We have a system through which Marines can try to remediate actions believed to have been unfair or incorrect. In this case, it seems the system worked as designed, and Maj. Galvin had his record cleared. We all wish him well."

The Marines hope the military will do more to demonstrate that they are not outcasts but victims. "Military justice requires that those who . . . have conducted wrongdoing be held accountable," Galvin said, "not just that those offended be patted on the back."

Two Essex sailors plead guilty to using and selling a bunch of drugs

By Geoff Ziezulewicz

Navy Times, January 30, 2019



Two sailors based aboard the amphibious assault ship Essex pleaded guilty this month to using and distributing a bevy of illegal drugs. (Navy)

Two sailors assigned to the amphibious assault ship [Essex](#) pleaded guilty this month to using and distributing a boatload of drugs in the San Diego area, according to Navy officials and legal filings.

Hull Maintenance Technician 2nd Class Casey T. Balausky, and Interior Communications Specialist 2nd Class Tyler D. Farley were both charged with conspiring to sell 3.5 grams of cocaine — called an “eight ball” because it weighs an eighth of an ounce — to an undercover [Naval Criminal Investigative Service](#) agent in 2018.

Military prosecutors also alleged that from late 2017 through mid-2018, Balausky distributed cocaine, hallucinogenic mushrooms, LSD and [3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine](#) — what’s better known as the mood-altering stimulant MDMA or “Ecstasy.”

At one point in April, he possessed 11.5 grams of mushrooms and a milliliter of LSD that he planned to traffic, the charge sheets state.

He also faced one specification for allegedly stealing a military arc welder — valued at about \$8,300 — in March of last year.

Farley was charged with bringing the eight ball of coke onto a military base and for possessing and distributing cocaine and mushrooms.

Prosecutors also alleged that he abused cocaine, mushrooms, LSD and Ecstasy from February through April of last year.

Military attorneys for both sailors declined comment through a Navy spokesman.

Balausky was sentenced to 34 months in the brig and a bad-conduct discharge, according to Navy Region Southwest spokesman Brian O’Rourke.

Farley will spend two years behind bars, pay a \$250 fine and then get booted on a bad-conduct discharge, O’Rourke said.

It remains unclear if Balausky and Farley already have been incarcerated. They could not be reached by telephone and they failed to respond to requests for comment sent through social media.

Unlike the ongoing case against the alleged [LSD ring](#) operating out of the nuclear reactor department of the Japan-based aircraft carrier Ronald Reagan, O’Rourke said this narcotics operation appeared to be limited to Balausky and Farley.

“We’re not looking at anybody else,” he said.

Exactly how the two came to the attention of NCIS also remains unclear.

<https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2019/01/30/two-essex-sailors-plead-guilty-to-using-and-selling-a-bunch-of-drugs/>

Naval Surface Forces Pacific officials referred Navy Times to NCIS and the law enforcement agency declined comment, except to note that the probe into the sailors is finished.

A Minnesota native, Balausky enlisted in 2014 and the Essex was his first duty station, according to service records.

Farley is originally from Maine and also enlisted in 2014.

He joined the Essex in 2015.

Racism

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2019/01/27/duke-professor-chinese-students-speak-english/2695921002/>

Duke professor sparks online outrage after telling Chinese students to only speak English

By Kristin Lam

USA TODAY, January 27, 2019



People walk on the campus of Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, on March 26, 2010. A university official stepped down over the weekend after telling Chinese students to speak "English 100 percent of the time" in a leaked email. (Photo: Jim R. Bounds, Bloomberg)

A Duke University official [stepped down](#) Saturday after her [email telling international students](#) to "commit to using English 100% of the time" sparked outrage online.

Megan Neely, who had been the university's director of graduate studies in the biostatistics department, told the program's students in an email Friday to only speak English on campus and in professional settings. The email titled "Something to think about..." triggered a [petition with over 1,900 signatures](#) and has been shared across Twitter as well as Chinese social media site Weibo.

In the email, Neely claimed two unnamed faculty members complained to her about a group of students speaking Chinese "very loudly" in a common area. They asked to see photos of the first and second-year students so that they could "remember them if the students ever interviewed for an internship or asked to work with them for a master's project."

A university spokesperson confirmed in an email to USA TODAY that images of the email shared online were authentic.

"They were disappointed that these students were not taking the opportunity to improve their English and were being so impolite as to have a conversation that not everyone on the floor could understand," Neely wrote in the Friday email. "To international students, PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE keep these unintended consequences in mind when you choose to speak in Chinese in the building."

"I have no idea how hard it has been and still is for you to come to the US and have to learn in a non-native language. As such, I have the upmost respect for what you are doing," she continued. "That being said, I encourage you to commit to using English 100% of the time when you are in Hock or any other professional setting."

"Don't be racist," [one Twitter user commented](#). "This is RIDICULOUS. I wrote in English so that you, the narrow-minded DUKE UNIVERSITY professor, can understand it."

The university's Asian Students Association and International Association [posted a joint statement](#) that called the email inappropriate and unprofessional.

"For international students, speaking in their mother tongue is a means of comfort and familiarity with a home and culture that is oftentimes suppressed within the United States," the statement said. "Within the bounds of one's personal conversations, people should wholeheartedly be able to speak any language they wish — to strip away this agency is demeaning, disrespectful, and wholly discriminatory."

Meanwhile, Weibo users have already viewed the hashtag "Duke University bans speaking Chinese" 6.7 million times, the South China Morning Post reported.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2019/01/27/duke-professor-chinese-students-speak-english/2695921002/>

Previously, Neely warned biostatistics masters students not to speak languages other than English on campus. In [a February 2018 email](#), the screenshot of which a university spokesperson confirmed to USA TODAY, Neely told students doing so may make getting research opportunities in the program harder.

By Saturday afternoon, the medical school's dean told the program's students in an email that Neely asked to step down as director, effective immediately. Mary Klotman apologized for the message, adding the university respects every culture and language. The dean also said she asked the university's Office of Institutional Equity to review the biostatistics program and recommend learning environment improvements for "students from all backgrounds."

"There is absolutely no restriction or limitation on the language you use to converse and communicate with each other," Klotman [wrote in the letter](#). "Your career opportunities and recommendations will not in any way be influenced by the language you use outside the classroom. And your privacy will always be protected."

More than 1,900 students had [signed a petition](#) as of Sunday afternoon calling for a full investigation of Neely's emails and to identify the unnamed faculty members. The petition calls for an independent committee and "appropriate remedial measures."

Neely still works as an associate professor, the school newspaper The Chronicle reported.

SEE ALSO:

[Duke University Apologizes Over Professor's Email Asking Chinese Students to Speak English](#) [*The New York Times*, 2019-01-27]

[U.S. college official who told Chinese students to speak English quits](#) [*Reuters*, 2019-01-27]

[A Duke professor warned Chinese students to speak English](#) [*CNN*, 2019-01-28]

'Empire' cast member alleges homophobic attack in Chicago

By Don Babwin

The Associated Press, January 29, 2019



In this May 14, 2018 file photo, Jussie Smollett, a cast member in the TV series "Empire," attends the Fox Networks Group 2018 programming presentation afterparty in New York. Chicago police have opened a hate crime investigation after a man the department identified as a 36-year-old cast member of the television show "Empire" alleged he was physically attacked by men who shouted racial and homophobic slurs. Police wouldn't release the actor's name, but a statement from the Fox studio and network on which "Empire" airs identified him Tuesday, Jan. 29, 2019, as Jussie

Smollett. (Photo by Evan Agostini/Invision/AP)

CHICAGO (AP) — A cast member on the hit television show "Empire" alleged he was physically attacked by men in Chicago who shouted racial and homophobic slurs, police said Tuesday.

Police did not release the actor's name but a statement from Fox, which airs "Empire," identified him as Jussie Smollett, 36. Authorities said they are investigating the alleged attack as a hate crime. Smollett is black and openly gay.

According to a police statement, the actor was walking near the Chicago River downtown around 2 a.m. Tuesday when he was approached by two men who shouted at him, struck him in the face and poured an "unknown substance" on him before one of them wrapped a rope around his neck.

Police spokesman Anthony Guglielmi said that when officers first came in contact with Smollett, he still had a rope around his neck. While being interviewed by detectives, Guglielmi said Smollett told them that the attackers yelled he was in "MAGA country," an apparent reference to the Trump campaign's "Make America Great Again" slogan that some critics of the president have decried as racist and discriminatory.

The police spokesman added that the two men were wearing masks. Investigators have not found any surveillance video or witnesses from which they can put together a description of the offenders, he said.

Smollett was able to take himself to Northwestern Memorial Hospital. He was last reported in good condition.

Guglielmi also said the FBI is investigating a threatening letter targeting Smollett that was sent to the Fox studio in Chicago last week.

The hourlong drama "Empire" follows an African-American family as they navigate the ups and downs of the record industry. Jamal Lyon, Smollett's character, is the gay, middle son of Empire Entertainment founder Lucious Lyon and Cookie Lyon, played by Terrence Howard and Taraji P. Henson, respectively.

Twentieth Century Fox Television and Fox Entertainment released a statement Tuesday in support of Smollett. "The entire studio, network and production stands united in the face of any despicable act of violence," the statement read.

"Empire" co-creator Lee Daniels also voiced his support for Smollett in an Instagram video.

<https://www.apnews.com/1eb82717d12743d4b86b519a6a902cfa>

“You didn’t deserve, nor anybody deserves, to have a noose put around your neck,” Daniels said. “You are better than that, we are better than that, America is better than that.”

California Sen. Kamala Harris, a 2020 Democratic presidential hopeful, knows Smollett personally and called the attack “outrageous” and “awful.”

“He is one of the kindest, most gentle human beings I’ve ever met,” Harris said Tuesday, adding that she’s still learning more details about the incident.

Smollett has been active in LBGTQ issues and he released his debut album, “Sum of My Music,” last year.

“Empire” is shot in Chicago and a Fox spokeswoman said the program is currently in production.

Associated Press writer Elana Schor contributed to this report from Washington.

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SEE ALSO:

[Jussie Smollett attack highlights amplified risks facing black LGBT community](#) [USA TODAY, 2019-01-31]

[Assault on 'Empire' actor Jussie Smollett serves as a stark reminder that lynching and noose symbolism is still prevalent](#) [USA TODAY, 2019-01-31]

[Assault on 'Empire' actor Smollett investigated as hate crime](#) [Reuters, 2019-01-29]

Religion

Anti-Semitic killings in 2018 'highest' in decades: Israel

By AFP

Yahoo News, January 27, 2019



Holocaust survivor Mordechai Wiesel (R) and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (L) arrive for the weekly cabinet meeting on the occasion of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day in Jerusalem on January 27, 2019 (AFP Photo/ABIR SULTAN)

Jerusalem (AFP) - The number of Jews murdered in anti-Semitic attacks around the world in 2018 reached its "highest" level in decades after a mass shooting at a US synagogue, an Israeli government report said Sunday.

A total of 13 Jews were killed in three separate attacks over the year, according to the 2018 Global anti-Semitism Report released on International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

A gunman shot dead 11 people at a synagogue in the US city of Pittsburgh in October in America's deadliest ever anti-Semitic attack.

In January, a student was also murdered in California, and in March 85-year-old Holocaust survivor Mirielle Knoll was killed in a brutal attack at her Paris home.

"This marks the highest number of Jews murdered in anti-Semitic attacks since the attacks on the Argentinian Jewish community in the 1990s," the report said.

For the second year running the number of anti-Semitic incidents in Britain reached a record high, the report said.

It cited British charity Community Security Trust which counted over 100 anti-Semitic episodes a month in 2018, a quarter of which occurred on social media.

The report noted a 69 percent rise in reported anti-Semitic attacks and threats in France after a two-year decline.

Contrary to previous years, anti-Semitic violence in 2018 was "led by neo-Nazis and white supremacists", the report said.

It defined 70 percent of attacks as "anti-Israel in nature", noting a spike when the US moved its embassy to Jerusalem in May and violence flared on the Gaza border.

Diaspora Minister Naftali Bennett said it was Israel's "responsibility to help the millions of our brothers and sisters in the Diaspora who are facing more and more anti-Semitic crimes".

He called on governments around the world to "take a harsh stance against the hatred of Jews".

Despite the grim numbers, there were also "room for hope", the 113-page report said.

"More and more governments are declaring their commitment to fighting anti-Semitism, and appointing emissaries to that end," the report said.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center in Jerusalem on Sunday also released its annual report on the "Worldwide Investigation and Prosecution of Nazi War Criminals".

It said that between April 2017 and March 2018 one person was convicted for Nazi-era crimes, while three others were charged.

Hate crimes charged in Pittsburgh synagogue massacre case

By Mark Scoloro

The Associated Press, January 29, 2019

A man accused of opening fire at a [Pittsburgh synagogue in October](#), killing 11 people and wounding seven others, was indicted Tuesday on additional counts that include allegations of hate crimes.

A federal grand jury added 19 charges to the 44 counts previously levied against Robert Bowers, 46, of Baldwin, Pennsylvania.

Thirteen of the new counts are hate crime violations and the others accuse him of obstructing religious beliefs and discharging a firearm during crimes of violence.

Messages left for Bowers' lawyers were not immediately returned.

The indictment said Bowers posted criticism of a Jewish charity on a social media account and linked to a page that said Dor Hadash, one of the three congregations in the synagogue building, hosted refugee-related events.

"You like to bring in hostile invaders to dwell among us? We appreciate the list of friends you have provided," Bowers posted on Oct. 10, the indictment said.

On the day of the attack, Oct. 27, Bowers again posted that the immigrant aid society "likes to bring invaders that kill our people. I can't sit by and watch my people get slaughtered. Screw your optics, I'm going on," the indictment said.

Bowers was carrying several guns as he approached the Tree of Life synagogue building and shot out a large window on the building's facade before he entered it, the indictment said.

[Bowers is accused](#) of shooting to death members of the Dor Hadash, Tree of Life and New Light congregations, which were all conducting Sabbath services when the attack began. He is accused of injuring two other congregants and five officers. Authorities had previously reported four officers were injured.

[Survivors described](#) how they hid in a supply closet and other places in the vast building as the gunman searched for more victims. Authorities said he expressed hatred of Jews during the attack and told investigators "all these Jews need to die."

Bowers' new charges include 11 counts of hate crimes resulting in death, two of hate crimes involving an attempt to kill, three congregant victims were added to counts for obstruction of religious beliefs, and three additional firearms charges for those three congregants, federal prosecutors said.

Bowers had previously pleaded not guilty to counts including using a firearm to commit murder and obstruction of religious exercise resulting in death.

AP writer Claudia Lauer in Philadelphia contributed. Scoloro reported from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

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SEE ALSO:

[Suspect in Pittsburgh synagogue massacre faces more charges](#) [Reuters, 2019-01-29]

[Grand jury brings new charges against alleged Pennsylvania synagogue shooter](#) [The Hill, 2019-01-29]

They Created a Muslim Enclave in Upstate N.Y. Then Came the Online Conspiracies.

By Rick Rojas

The New York Times, January 28, 2019



From left, Hussein Adams, Sultan Jilani, Rashid Clark and Tahirah Clark, all residents of Islamberg, N.Y., spoke last week in Binghamton about arrests of people accused of conspiring to attack their secluded Muslim enclave. (Credit: Heather Ainsworth for The New York Times)

HANCOCK, N.Y. — Deep in the dense woods near the Catskill Mountains, a settlement was started decades ago by Muslim families, many of them African-Americans from New York City, who were seeking to distance themselves from neighborhoods they saw as dangerous and laden with corrosive influences. Holy Islamberg was intended to be a refuge, a serene environment to pray and bring up children.

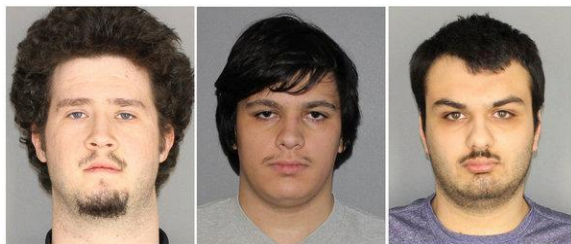
In the years since, the enclave’s residents have forged relationships with state and local law enforcement, and made connections with their non-Muslim neighbors from nearby towns. They work alongside each other in medical clinics and offices. Their children are teammates in youth football and basketball games.

But residents of Islamberg have found that there is no such thing as a safe haven in the internet age.

Conspiracy theorists and anti-Muslim groups have sketched a false portrayal of the community as a hidden-away den of Islamic extremism. Last week, the police in Greece, N.Y., roughly 200 miles away, arrested four young people who are [accused of amassing a stockpile](#) of firearms and homemade bombs with plans to target the community.

The plot was the second major one on Islamberg to be thwarted by the authorities in recent years.

The threatened violence reflects how Islamberg has become fodder for a pernicious part of the internet, one steeped in virulent hate and misinformation spread by websites like [4chan](#) and [Infowars](#), alongside baseless theories like [Pizzagate](#) and [QAnon](#).



Brian Colaneri, Andrew Crysel and Vincent Vetromile, left to right, were arrested and charged with plotting a terror attack. (Credit: Greece Police Department, via Associated Press)

“These kids in Greece, they’ve never been to Islamberg,” said Hussein Adams, chief executive of the Muslims of America and a resident whose family has lived in the community for three generations. “They go on the internet and they’re fed all this fake news and all this misinformation, and they come up with a plan.”

Mr. Adams and other residents said they subscribe to a faith based on love and respect.

And the local authorities said the swirl of online conspiracy theories about Islamberg were unfounded.

“They are law-abiding,” said Maj. William F. McEvoy, the State Police commander in the region. “They are positive, solid members of the community.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/28/nyregion/islamberg-ny-attack-plot.html>

Islamberg has about 200 residents, some from families who have lived here for two or more generations, and covers some 60 acres outside Binghamton, near the Pennsylvania state line and about 150 miles from New York City. It is set back off a bumpy road on private property, up steep slopes, past pastures and alongside a creek.

The winter conditions can be punishing, with snow and ice making the community even harder to reach. Still, residents have a spread of land offering enough room to build homes and a mosque and raise livestock and crops.

Islamberg was started around 1980 by a group of mostly African-Americans who converted to Islam in the 1960s and followed Sheikh Mubarik Ali Shah Gilani, a Pakistani cleric and founder of Muslims of America.

He encouraged his followers to flee large cities and build communes in rural areas where they could separate themselves from the crime and the violence they faced in their old neighborhoods and the decadence that, in his view, pervaded secular society. Over the years, his followers have set up about a dozen other villages similar to Islamberg, including ones in Virginia, Georgia and Tennessee.

The presence of a largely black community whose members wear Muslim garb has been conspicuous in the nearby small towns like Hancock that are populated with mostly white residents. Their arrival more than 30 years ago came with tension, but over time, the relationship warmed as residents of Islamberg became enmeshed in the broader community.

“We’ve never had a problem,” said Nancy Furdock, who has lived in Hancock — “two mountains over” from Islamberg, she said — for nearly two decades and has become friendly with people who live in the enclave.



Men at prayer in Islamberg’s mosque. (Credit: Mark Lennihan/Associated Press)

She corrected herself slightly, “We have a problem with outsiders.”

“Why don’t they come talk to us?” she added, referring to those who circulate conspiracy theories about Islamberg online. “We’ll tell you what’s going on, which is nothing.”

In recent years, far-right Facebook groups have warned of an encampment governed by an oppressive form of Shariah law, which they claimed would encroach on broader society.

Documentary-style videos portrayed Islamberg as a jihadi training camp and terrorist sleeper cell, and people who present themselves as national security experts have published reports online alleging a culture of “militant brainwashing,” forced marriages and doling out lashes and other forms of draconian abuse for violating its rules.

The community’s critics seized upon an arrest, in 2017, of a 64-year-old man accused of stealing ammunition in nearby Johnson City, which led the authorities to [find a storage locker stocked](#) with powerful weapons.

Officials said at the time they had found “no indications there was a plan in place to commit an act of violence.” Still, the case served as fodder for purveyors of disinformation, who peddled false stories claiming the weapons were bound for Islamberg, that President Trump had ordered a raid and that investigators had uncovered “America’s WORST Nightmare.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/28/nyregion/islamberg-ny-attack-plot.html>

Trespassers have been found attempting to sneak into the community or to fly drones over the property to conduct their own investigations. And a recurring ride of bikers has rumbled past Islamberg's entrance in a caravan to alert the community to their vigilance.

"I don't believe the people inside here are peaceful and are standing for the same thing we stand for," Joseph Glasgow, an organizer of the demonstration, called a ["ride for national security."](#) told the crowd that had assembled in a parking lot before setting off for Islamberg in 2017.



A security post outside the rural Catskill Mountain enclave near Binghamton, N.Y. (Credit: Mark Lennihan/Associated Press)

The speculation about terrorism has inspired more than protests. In 2017, a Tennessee man, Robert Doggart, was [sentenced to nearly 20 years](#) in prison over a plot to recruit a militia and storm the enclave. In a phone call recorded as part of a federal wiretap, Mr. Doggart said, "I don't want to have to kill children, but there's always collateral damage."

The most recent threat of violence came last week after investigators in Greece, outside Rochester, thwarted an apparent plan concocted by a group who, officials said, had stockpiled 23 firearms and three homemade bombs.

Three men — Vincent Vetromile, 19, Brian Colaneri, 20, and Andrew Crysel, 18 — were arrested and charged with criminal possession of a weapon and conspiracy, and a fourth person, whose identity was not released because he or she is a minor, was charged as an adolescent with the same offenses.

It is unclear how the individuals were connected, but three of them had been Boy Scouts. In the days before the plot was uncovered, at least one of them, Mr. Vetromile, shared [far-right memes and conspiracy theories](#) about border security and a government scheme to seize weapons. The authorities also said that the defendants had corresponded using Discord, a group chat app created for video gamers that [became popular with far-right activists](#).

Mr. Vetromile and Mr. Colaneri remain in custody, according to jail records.

"Just imagine having to wake up and tell your children of such a plot, tell your children that their life was in danger," said Rashid Clark, Islamberg's mayor.

Much of the scrutiny directed at Islamberg centers on the community's ties to Mr. Gilani, an elusive figure who [became more widely known](#) after the 2002 murder of The Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl in Pakistan. Mr. Pearl, who was reporting on a story about the [so-called shoe bomber](#), Richard C. Reid, was [seeking an interview](#) with the sheikh when he was abducted. (The sheikh is not believed to have been involved in the plot, counterterrorism analysts said.)

Suspicion has also sprung from the community's purported association with an obscure Muslim group called Jamaat al-Fuqra, which is tied to the sheikh and has drawn the notice of law enforcement in the United States because of accusations of criminal activity beginning in the 1980s.

In 2002, after the gun-charge arrests of three people who the authorities said were part of Jamaat al-Fuqra, federal prosecutors [described a "history of violence"](#) involving the organization, including firebombings and murder. Islamberg's leaders have denied a connection to the group.

And an analysis published in 2008 in the CTC Sentinel, a journal published by the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, concluded that [there was no evidence](#) proving Islamberg was part of a covert training

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/28/nyregion/islamberg-ny-attack-plot.html>

operation. Instead, the report said, neither “the presence of weapons (or even arsenals), nor weapons training are particularly unusual phenomena in rural America.”



A resident of Islamberg, N.Y., Cassandra Greene, left, and Nancy Furdock, who lives nearby in Hancock, N.Y., at a news conference held by Muslims of America after the arrests of four people in connection with a terror plot. (Credit: Heather Ainsworth for The New York Times)

The right-wing interest reflects “a certain amount of obsession that I don’t see how it’s possibly justified,” William Rosenau, one of the authors of the Sentinel analysis, said last week. “I think the fact that

the members are Muslim and almost all African-American is a source of a lot of the anxiety. I think it’s straight up religious and racial fear.”

Major McEvoy, the State Police commander in the region, said the story of Islamberg reminded him of his own: His mother had moved their family from Brooklyn to Binghamton for a change.

“They believe in education,” Major McEvoy said. “They believe in hard work. They believe in raising their children with those goals in mind.”

A day after the most recent plot emerged, nudging Islamberg back under the glare of outside attention, community officials organized a news conference in a hotel ballroom in Binghamton. There, its leaders once again had to challenge falsehoods about them.

“Beautiful place to live, beautiful people to live with,” said Cassandra Greene, who was among the earliest arrivals to Islamberg more than 30 years ago.

After the news conference, Mr. Adams of Muslims of America marveled at his community’s resilience. He said he believed that the alarm and cynicism that has surrounded Islamberg had not seeped inside the community.

Indeed, he said, Islamberg has remained very much the same place his parents had sought, with tranquility among residents and the latitude to live out their faith. To him, that was most evident in the mornings. The community rises well before sunrise. People wash their bodies and put on clean clothes and perfume. They step outside, on the land where they hunt and raise much of their own food.

“We say our prayers to God almighty,” Mr. Adams said. “That starts our day, and that’s everything.”

Follow Rick Rojas on Twitter: [@RaR](https://twitter.com/RaR)

https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-gives-his-blessing-to-allowing-states-to-teach-bible-literacy-in-public-schools/2019/01/28/50c1593c-22eb-11e9-ad53-824486280311_story.html

Trump offers encouragement for state efforts to teach Bible literacy in public schools

By John Wagner

The Washington Post, January 28, 2019



President Trump walks out to announce a deal with congressional leaders to temporarily reopen the government on Friday. (Jabin Botsford/The Washington Post)

President Trump gave his blessing Monday to lawmakers in several states who are pushing legislation to allow Bible literacy classes in public schools.

“Numerous states introducing Bible Literacy classes, giving students the option of studying the Bible,” Trump wrote in a morning tweet. “Starting to make a turn back? Great!”

As president, Trump has no formal say in state legislative processes.

His tweet came shortly after a segment on Fox News Channel’s “Fox & Friends” reporting that bills have been introduced in at least six states that would allow public school children to study the historical significance of the Bible.

The legislation has drawn objections from groups seeking to protect the separation of church and state. The groups argue that the bills are backdoor attempts to promote Christianity in public schools.

The “Fox & Friends” segment included an interview with Aaron McWilliams, a Republican state representative from North Dakota, one of the states where lawmakers are weighing such bills.

“There’s a separation of church and state, but there’s not a separation of books from education,” McWilliams said.

The other states where such bills are under consideration include Missouri, Indiana, West Virginia, Virginia and Florida, according to the Fox News report.

Last year, Bible literacy bills were considered in at least three other states — Alabama, Iowa and West Virginia — but none passed, according to the American Civil Liberties Union, which has opposed the efforts.



Lawmakers in Kentucky passed legislation in 2017 creating state regulations for public high schools to offer elective literature courses on the Bible and Hebrew Scriptures.

Trump has made repeated overtures to the evangelical community as president, including advocating abolishment of a provision in the tax

code that bans tax-exempt churches from supporting political candidates.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-gives-his-blessing-to-allowing-states-to-teach-bible-literacy-in-public-schools/2019/01/28/50c1593c-22eb-11e9-ad53-824486280311_story.html

His embrace of Bible literacy drew barbs from critics on Twitter, several of whom pointed to an episode in January 2016 in which then-candidate Trump referred to “two Corinthians” instead of “Second Corinthians” during a speech at Liberty University. His mistake drew laughter from many in the audience at the private Christian school.

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SEE ALSO:

[President Trump just tweeted support for Bible courses, but it’s already legal to teach about the Bible](#) [*The Washington Post*, 2019-01-30]

[Trump touts proposed Bible literacy classes in state schools](#) [*The Hill*, 2019-01-28]

U.S. judge sentences men to 25 to 30 years for plot to bomb Somalis

By Alice Mannette

Reuters, January 25, 2019



L - R; Curtis Allen 49, Gavin Wright, 49 and Patrick Eugene Stein, 47, arrested and charged in connection with plotting to bomb an apartment complex in western Kansas, are shown in these booking photos in Wichita, Kansas, U.S., provided October 15, 2016. (Courtesy of Sedgwick County Sheriff's Office/Handout via REUTERS)

Wichita, Kan. - A federal judge sentenced three white men to 25, 26 and 30 years in prison on Friday for a 2016 plot to bomb a Kansas apartment complex that is home to Somali immigrants and their mosque.

U.S. District Judge Eric Melgren in Wichita, Kansas sentenced Curtis Allen and Gavin Wright to 25 years and Patrick Stein to 30 years on the charge of conspiring to use “a weapon of mass destruction.”

Melgren also sentenced Allen, Stein and Wright to 10 years in prison for conspiring to violate the civil rights of their intended victims. The sentences on the two charges will run concurrently. The men, described by prosecutors as members of a right-wing militia group, were found guilty in April.

In addition, Wright was sentenced to one year in prison for lying to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. This sentence will be served consecutively.

“I hope this sends a message the U.S. is a place that protects all cultures and all religions,” Stephen McAllister, U.S. Attorney for Kansas, told a news conference.

In an emotional statement in court before he was sentenced Allen, who had served in the U.S. Marine Corps, said: “I’m just ashamed of myself and I’m sorry.”

The men plotted to detonate explosive-laden vehicles at the four corners of the mosque and housing complex in Garden City, a town of about 27,000 people in southwest Kansas, aiming to level the building and kill its occupants, prosecutors said.

Officials investigated the plot for several months as the men stockpiled guns and explosives in preparation for attacking the apartment complex, where about 120 Somali immigrants lived, authorities said.

Prosecutors said the men wanted to send a message to Somali immigrants that they were not welcome in the United States.

Authorities said the three were members of a militia called the Kansas Security Force and formed a splinter group, the Crusaders. They tried unsuccessfully to recruit others to join their plot, prosecutors said, and it was one of those men who tipped off the FBI to the plan.

Reporting by Alice Mannette in Wichita, Kansas; Writing by Suzannah Gonzales in Chicago; Editing by Matthew Lewis and Grant McCool

Sexism

Americans take the pain of girls less seriously than that of boys, a new study finds

By Isaac Stanley-Becker

The Washington Post, January 31, 2019



A study published this month in the Journal of Pediatric Psychology suggests that adults are likely to downgrade the pain experienced by young girls, raising questions about equitable health care. (Klaus Rose/Picture-Alliance/DPA/AP)

A child's finger is pricked at a doctor's office, and the child cries out. "Ow! Ah! Oh!"

How much pain adult Americans think the young patient is suffering will depend on whether they believe the child to be a girl or a boy, according to a [study published this month in the Journal of Pediatric Psychology](#). Those who know the distressed patient as "Samuel" will infer that he is in more pain than those who know the patient as "Samantha," even though Samuel and Samantha are in fact the same 5-year-old, whose shoulder-length blond hair, red T-shirt and gym shorts don't immediately suggest male or female characteristics.

The child's finger-prick test was captured in a short video played for 264 adults, men and women between the ages of 18 and 75. On average, participants told that they were watching a boy's reaction to his prekindergarten doctor's visit rated his pain, on a scale from 0 (no pain) to 100 (severe pain), as 50.42, while those instructed that the patient was a girl rated her pain as 45.90. When researchers controlled for explicit gender stereotypes — the belief that boys are more stoic — the difference vanished, suggesting that biases about the willingness of male vs. female children to display pain were behind the belief that this particular boy was truly suffering because he was moved to cry out.

The results, in what lead author Brian D. Earp described as a "new research area," contribute to growing understanding of [sex differences in pain](#), a topic that has mainly been studied in the context of adults. They add further dimensions to the exploration of pain assessments [biased by race](#), based on dubious notions about biological differences between blacks and whites. And the results suggest a possible need for a course correction in pediatric care, where health-care providers may exhibit the same biases that influence the general public.

"Adults have a lot of authority and agency in saying, 'This is how I feel.' We express ourselves in nuanced ways," Earp, the associate director of the Yale-Hastings Program in Ethics and Health Policy, said in an interview with The Washington Post. "But young children and how they're attended to depends on the judgments of adults in the room. Understanding the structure of those judgments is important for equitable health care."

In a finding that surprised the paper's authors, the downgrading of female pain was driven by female participants, who were more likely than men to say that the pain of the subject was less severe when told she was a girl.

"This is a big mystery," Earp said. "We're spitballing to come up with a reason."

A similar dynamic seemed to appear in a [2014 study](#) that the new paper takes as its model, in which a sample of disproportionately female nursing and psychology students viewed the same video as in the

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/01/31/americans-take-pain-girls-less-seriously-than-that-boys-new-study-finds/>

recent study and rated Samuel as experiencing more pain than Samantha, despite the identical behavior. That those training to be medical providers were among the participants suggests crossover to the health-care profession. Their responses bolster the idea that gender bias about how children express pain influences even those “who are in a position to be making health-care decisions,” Earp said.

“It’s a preliminary result, but we’re pretty sure there’s a there there,” he said.

The lead author of the earlier study, Lindsey Cohen, a professor of psychology at Georgia State University, told The Post that he had long wondered whether their results, published in the journal *Children’s Health Care*, would hold up among men.

It appears that they don’t. In the new study, the gender of the young patient had no effect on assessments offered by 156 male participants, among several hundred who viewed the video.

The discovery is in “some tension,” the paper notes, with the conclusions of related experiments, though not on the central finding that the pain of boys is taken more seriously. For instance, a [2008 study](#) found that fathers rated the pain of their sons higher than that of their daughters in a cold pressor test, in which a subject immerses a hand in a container of ice water. Mothers showed no difference.

Meanwhile, [research has shown](#) that young children don’t experience pain differently on account of gender in the way that the [adult population does](#), both in terms of sensitivity and clinical risk. The sex hormones [thought to account for the difference](#) are not present before puberty. Studies of how adults nevertheless come to different conclusions about the pain of children have mainly been limited to the attitudes of their parents, who enjoy a unique vantage point.

The new study accesses a wider audience. And the apparent biases of the women it surveyed came as no surprise to Kate Manne, a philosopher at Cornell University and the author of “[Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny](#).” She said it was the logical conclusion of women rating their own pain as less severe.

“Since there’s more pressure on women to be appropriately sympathetic to pain, and since we’re biased in the direction of taking male pain more seriously, it makes sense that women are at least as bad if not worse,” Manne said.

The results, while not surprising, were “really sad,” she observed. “We should be troubled by the fact that seemingly all else equal, perceived gender plus a few gender stereotypes are enough to have a little girl’s pain responded to with less concern.”

If boys do tend to understate their own pain, Earp said, there might be good reason to see the same behavior as reflecting more intense pain in a male subject, one who has been led to believe, “Boys don’t cry.”

But Manne pointed to [research casting doubt](#) on the idea that young boys have already learned to bottle up their emotions. Some analysis has found, by contrast, that boys are more likely than girls to express negative emotions in childhood, a pattern that reverses only in adolescence.

“It’s still possible that we socialize boys to be stoic, but that pernicious norm doesn’t appear to be very potent,” she said. “Then the results start to look really disturbing, because there’s no basis for thinking the boy was actually in any more pain.”

Earp said he would like his next study to introduce the factor of race, which has been explored — revealing a “view in the back of people’s heads that black people have literally thicker skin,” he said — but rarely in combination with gender bias, especially among children.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/01/31/americans-take-pain-girls-less-seriously-than-that-boys-new-study-finds/>

Stark examples exist of the consequences, for both adults and children, of racially biased assessments of pain. Some of them have been [documented by the American Medical Association's Journal of Ethics](#).

African Americans and Hispanics have been shown to receive lower doses of pain medication than whites. They wait longer in emergency rooms for pain medication. Their pain needs have been taken less seriously in hospice care. Though studies have shown that African Americans report greater back pain, clinicians record the opposite. Minority and low-income children encounter more difficulty getting oral pain evaluated and treated.

To Earp, this pattern suggests that the way adults interpret the pain of children could have consequences for their health, prompting the question, “What are the real-life treatment implications of this cognitive bias?”

Sexual Assault / Harassment

BLAKE Act would target ex-congressman for not repaying taxpayer funds used in settlement

By Sunlen Serfaty

CNN, January 29, 2019

In a shot at former Rep. Blake Farenthold, a bill is scheduled to be introduced Wednesday in the House of Representatives -- appropriately named the BLAKE Act -- that would bar any former member of Congress from lobbying Congress if they have not paid back taxpayer money used in sexual harassment settlements.

Farenthold, a Texas Republican, has not paid back the \$84,000 of taxpayer money he used to pay the settlement of a former aide who accused him of sexual harassment and improper conduct -- money that he once promised to repay. [After resigning](#) last year, Farenthold raised eyebrows months later when he was back on Capitol Hill lobbying for the Calhoun Port Authority. Farenthold is not lobbying at this time.

Republican Rep. Mark Walker of North Carolina will introduce the bill Wednesday morning. The formal name of the bill -- the "Bad Lawmakers Accountability and Key Emends Act" -- spells out BLAKE and, according to Walker's Communications Director Jack Minor, is "ironically directed" at Farenthold.

Reached on the phone by CNN, Farenthold declined to comment.

If passed into law, the measure could not force Farenthold and other members with outstanding settlements to pay them back, given that it will not be retroactive. But if the bill progresses, Walker would ask House leaders to enforce it retroactively.

Congress passed an overhaul of the Congressional Accountability Act in December, changing the rules on Capitol Hill for how sexual harassment claims are made and handled and, for the first time, holding members of Congress accountable directly for sexual harassment settlements, not letting them use federal funds to pay them.

The way the new law is written, the settlement money still first comes out of a US Treasury fund. Members are required to pay back the money directly. If they don't, they risk having the amount be deducted from their wages. But the new law does not account for a situation like Farenthold's, where he did not repay the settlement money, then resigned from Congress, and the enforcement mechanism goes away.

This law, if passed, would aim to at least minimize the former member's power and influence on Capitol Hill if they do not repay the money owed, by barring them from lobbying Congress.

Farenthold was investigated by the House Ethics Committee over the allegations of sexual harassment by the former aide, Lauren Greene, who received the \$84,000 settlement after she sued Farenthold in December 2014 for gender discrimination, sexual harassment and creating a hostile work environment.

Farenthold denied some of the allegations against him but apologized for using for inappropriate language and his role in creating a hostile workplace. Farenthold resigned from his seat in Congress last April before the Ethics Committee [could rule against him in its probe](#), according to the office of a Democratic lawmaker on the panel.

Farenthold vowed in December 2017 to repay the taxpayer money used for the settlement, but after he resigned he told ABC News in May that he had been advised [by his attorney not to repay the settlement](#).

MSU cited for 'serious noncompliance' with federal campus safety law related to Larry Nassar case

By Matt Mencarini and David Jesse, Lansing State Journal and Detroit Free Press

USA TODAY, January 31, 2019

EAST LANSING, Mich. – A U.S. Department of Education report, highly critical of Michigan State University's handling of sexual assault reports related to Larry Nassar and campus-wide safety issues, [found the university's failures](#) "may have posed an ongoing threat" to the campus community.

The report details results of a review conducted in the wake of the Nassar scandal and is the result of a U.S. Department of Education investigation of MSU's compliance with the Clery Act, which requires universities to issue timely notifications to the campus of a variety of crimes.

The report cites issues related to handling of complaints against Nassar, the former university doctor who sexually abused hundreds, the failure to properly categorize and disclose crime statistics and that MSU "lacked the ability and/or willingness to properly administer" to administer federal regulations.

More: [Larry Nassar gymnastics scandal has cost Michigan State \\$20M in legal fees so far](#)

More: [A year ago today, Larry Nassar was sentenced to an effective lifetime in prison](#)

"The safety and well-being of our campus community is our top priority," MSU acting President Satish Udpa said in a statement. "The Nassar crimes caused so much pain to so many people, and we have more work to do to address those issues and support the survivors and our community. We welcome the opportunity to work with experts to review and strengthen areas as we renew our commitment to improve."

The report is a serious finding of fault, said S. Daniel Carter, president of Safety Advisors for Educational Campuses and a national expert on campus crime issues, particularly the finding of a lack of administrative control.

"Short of an audit saying you stole money from us, this is the most serious finding," Carter said after reviewing the report. "What they are saying is MSU didn't have the policies and procedures in place to keep campus safe. That's a big deal. Everything in here is extremely serious. When the proper policies and procedures are in place and followed, you make campus a safe place."

He said the finding of lack of administrative control is generally a signal that a large fine is coming.

"It's a very big deal."

The report lists 11 Nassar victims – identified as Survivor A, Survivor B, etc. – who reported their abuse to university officials, including a strength and conditioning coach who was told in 2016.

More: [University of Michigan to pay fired gymnastics coach \\$15,000 for 4 days of work](#)

More: [Michigan State University interim president resigns following comments about Nassar survivors](#)

"There is no question that the details of the crimes reported by Survivors A, B, C, D, and E were communicated to officials who were" campus security authorities, the report said. Campus security authorities are university employees with safety-related job functions.

"Additionally, each of these crime victims reported conduct that clearly rose to the level of a Forcible Sex Offense or an incident of Fondling. Moreover, the crimes reported by these individuals ... unquestionably

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2019/01/31/msu-cited-violations-federal-law-larry-nassar-case/2729993002/>

posed a serious, ongoing threat to campus community members, and, most specifically, to female patients of MSU Sports Medicine."

MSU spokeswoman Emily Guerrant said the university knows that it has made mistakes.

"We know we've failed survivors and their families," she said.

Guerrant added that MSU received the report in December and is working on a formal response, but that there's no timeline for it to be submitted to the federal officials. She stressed that the report's findings were preliminary and contained no new information to the university.

MSU Trustee Kelly Tebay said board members hadn't seen a copy of the report, which was sent to the general counsel's office on Dec. 14. Tebay declined to comment until she had read it. The Free Press/Lansing State Journal gave her a copy of the report.

Messages were left seeking comment from the remaining trustees.

More: [*Sex abuse scandal highlights USOC's long-standing faults*](#)

More: [*Report: Michigan State's actions 'made it virtually impossible to know' truth about Nassar*](#)

As with other investigative and media reports that examined MSU in recent years, the report details instances when women or girls reported their abuse to university officials and subsequent failures to respond properly to those disclosures.

Among the instances in the Clery report is a 2016 disclosure by a former MSU athlete to a university strength and conditioning coach, who had recently been trained on his reporting requirements.

The coach "admitted that he knew how to report such an incident, but ignored his training, choosing to speak to Michigan State's Associate Director of Athletics about the matter instead," the report read. "However, the coach never reported the incident" to MSU Police or to staff in MSU's Office of Institutional Equity, which had responsibility for reviewing such complaints under Title IX.

The coach and the associate director of athletics are not named in the report.

The report cited several findings of "serious noncompliance" with federal law, including the failure to properly classify and report crime statistics and the failure to issue timely warnings.

Not all of the findings related to Nassar. The report details 21 instances from 2011 to 2016 when crimes such as burglaries and robberies occurred and no campus warnings were issued.

"Failure to issue Timely Warnings to notify the community of serious and on-going threats deprives students and employees of vital, time-sensitive information, and effectively denies the campus community the opportunity to take adequate steps to provide for their own safety and to increase their situational awareness," the report reads.

The report cited broad administrative failings, like the failure to set up internal controls to identify and stop Nassar's decades of abuse and the failure to "exercise sufficient oversight, governance, and/or coordination" of MSU officials who were responsible for safety-related functions on campus.

Federal investigators also found failures within the MSU Sexual Assault Program to produce or maintain "adequate documentation about crimes that were reported" because officials and staff thought they were exempt from reporting requirements.

More: [*Indiana Attorney General: USA Gymnastics policy on sexual abuse falls short of law*](#)

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2019/01/31/msu-cited-violations-federal-law-larry-nassar-case/2729993002/>

More: [*House report exposes structural failures within U.S. Olympic Committee*](#)

A similar issue was found in the university's human resources department, where decentralization and lack of uniform policies between human resources offices for different departments raised "a serious compliance concern" for the ability to track and report potential crimes.

The Clery Act requires reporting crime statistics on campus and a geographic area around campus, like parts of East Lansing.

"In its request to the (East Lansing Police Department) for Clery Act statistics related to housing for Greek organizations, religious living units, and cooperative houses from (calendar years) 2011-2016 ... Michigan State neglected to include necessary geographic components, and, in fact, excluded important geographic components from its request," the report reads.

Federal scrutiny is nothing new for MSU. In 2015, the U.S. Department of Education completed an investigation of MSU's handling of sexual assault and harassment on campus.

That investigation determined MSU failed to respond to complaints in a timely manner and may have contributed to a "sexually hostile environment" on campus.

The university promised campus-wide reforms after that investigation and changed many policies.

A new investigation of the same issues was also announced in the wake of Nassar's sentencing hearings. That inquiry is ongoing.

More: [*New report details how USOC, USAG failed to protect athletes in Larry Nassar sex abuse case*](#)

What comes next for MSU?

The last Michigan university to be found to have violated the Clery Act was Eastern Michigan University, which was fined \$350,000 in 2008 for covering up the murder of a student, Laura Dickinson, in her dorm room. At the time, it was the largest Clery Act fine ever.

That was surpassed in 2016, when the feds imposed a \$2,397,000 fine against Penn State University after extensive violations were uncovered in the wake of the Jerry Sandusky child sex abuse scandal. Penn State announced on Nov. 25, 2016, that it would not contest the fine.

MSU will have between 60 and 90 days to respond to the report. Then the department can either make changes to their report or come back to campus to do further investigation. Then another letter will be issued. At that point, the department could recommend that an administrative judge issue a fine. The fine could be appealed. The final determination on how much MSU would have to pay could be made by Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, who is a donor to MSU and has long ties to it.

The fine system is set up for a maximum of \$55,907 per violation. A determination a few years ago by then-Education Secretary Arne Duncan mandates that any violent crime that isn't reported – including sexual assault – be assessed the maximum fine.

The Clery Act could pull all federal financial aid from MSU. According to federal databases, MSU received \$423.4 million in 2016-17, the most current year available.

Follow [*Matt Mencarini*](#) and David Jesse on Twitter [*@MattMencarini*](#) and [*@reporterdavidj*](#)

Nearly 100,000 comments on Betsy DeVos's plan to overhaul rules on sexual assault probes

By Laura Meckler and Susan Svrluga

The Washington Post, January 30, 2019



A flood of public comments has arrived in response to Education Secretary Betsy DeVos's proposal to rewrite rules governing how universities investigate allegations of sexual harassment and assault. (Bill O'Leary/The Washington Post)

Tens of thousands of public comments have poured into the Education Department in response to [proposed rules](#) guiding how schools handle sexual assault allegations, with universities, attorneys for the accused, women's groups, angry students and parents weighing in on the emotional subject.

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos said the rewrite was needed to balance the rights of assault survivors with those who are accused, and to inject more due process into a high-stakes process. She holds final say over the regulation. Even so, her rules could be overturned by Congress, with newly empowered Democrats pushing for action and eyeing a possible higher-education bill as one way in.

The deadline for submitting comments to the Education Department was Wednesday, and as of midnight Tuesday, nearly 97,000 had been received, with more expected on the final day. It was not possible to assess the overall response but many voiced anger at DeVos's approach.

"This is the most controversial regulatory undertaking in the history of the Department of Education," said Terry Hartle of the American Council on Education, which represents university presidents. He estimated the volume of submissions would total 20 times what is typically received for a major regulatory proposal.

The proposal landed after years of rising pressure on universities to better respond to allegations of sexual assault, and amid the #MeToo movement, which brought increased scrutiny to harassment and assault allegations. DeVos says her priority is fairness.

"The fundamental focus from my perspective is ensuring that we are being fair and balanced for all students," she said Wednesday at a forum sponsored by the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities.

The proposed rule, published in November, replaced nonbinding guidance issued under the Obama administration. It narrows the cases that schools are required to investigate, creates a more limited definition of sexual harassment and allows — some say pressures — schools to create a higher legal standard in considering evidence.

It also codifies a number of rights for the accused, including the right to a live hearing with an adviser or attorney present, and the ability to cross-examine accusers.

The regulations stem from a 1972 law known as Title IX that bars sex discrimination — including harassment and assault — at schools receiving federal funding. Most of the attention is on higher education, but the rules also apply to elementary and secondary schools.

The proposed regulation describes what constitutes sexual harassment or assault and how schools must respond. Advocates for assault victims said the new rules will allow assailants and schools to escape

https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/nearly-100000-comments-on-betsy-devoss-plan-to-overhaul-rules-on-sexual-assault-probes/2019/01/30/ce441956-24b9-11e9-ad53-824486280311_story.html responsibility and discourage survivors of violence from reporting. Universities balked at new mandates for investigations and hearings. Supporters said the proposal rightly protects those who might be falsely accused.

The Education Department is required to read and respond to every comment submitted. The student government association of the University of Maryland unanimously passed a resolution condemning the proposal. Activists with the group End Rape on Campus urged supporters to file comments and said more than 5,500 people followed suit. “Your words can shape a safer world for survivors,” the group told supporters in an email.

Meanwhile, the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, a supporter of rights of the accused, [said the proposal](#) was packed with provisions that would improve the process.

Two advocacy groups reported, on the final day for comments, that the government website was having problems after supporters reported error messages when they tried to file comments. “We’re very concerned” assault survivors would lose another chance to be heard, after a process that had seemed dismissive of their views all along, said Sage Carson, manager of the group Know Your IX. A spokeswoman for the Education Department did not reply to a request for comment.

Others succeeded in filing comments on the final day, including the American Council on Education, which [wrote on behalf of 60 higher-education associations](#). The groups welcomed some aspects of the regulation, such as a provision allowing for mediation between parties. But overall, they said that the proposal imposes “highly legalistic, court-like processes” that conflict with the educational missions of their schools.

“Colleges and universities are not law enforcement agencies or courts,” wrote Ted Mitchell, president of the council.

Leaders at the University of California said that the definition of harassment was too narrow, requiring harassment to be both pervasive and severe, and said the government should not require that schools offer parties the chance to conduct cross-examination during live hearings.

“This is an intimidating prospect for both parties and witnesses, but will particularly deter complainants wrestling with the already difficult decision of whether to come forward,” wrote University of California President Janet Napolitano and Systemwide Title IX Coordinator Suzanne Taylor.

Other comments packed a shorter, harsher punch, such as Suzy Jacobs of Burbank, Calif. Her comment read: “Leave Title IX alone To all who worry their sons will be falsely accused of assault raise them not to abuse. Betsy DeVos is an idiot.”

Some said the proposal was needed to restore balance to the system. One anonymous parent wrote in with the story of how her son was falsely accused of harassment and assault during his freshman year of college in Upstate New York and how damaging the experience was for him.

“The proposed regulations protect both complainants and respondents,” and are consistent with the country’s values, including the presumption of innocence, wrote a group of attorneys and educators who have represented students involved in such cases.

David Shives of Advance, N.C., who identified himself as being with a law firm, said the proposal provides “some basic due process rights. Many innocent students have already been railroaded under prior law.”

In the end, whatever DeVos does could be overridden by Congress, which may consider broad higher-education legislation this year.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/nearly-100000-comments-on-betsy-devoss-plan-to-overhaul-rules-on-sexual-assault-probes/2019/01/30/ce441956-24b9-11e9-ad53-824486280311_story.html

Retiring Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), who chairs the Senate Education Committee, wants such a bill completed this year, a heavy lift on its own. Complicating the task: His Democratic counterpart, Sen. Patty Murray (Wash.), says she will insist on changes to the Title IX rules as part of any deal. Her staff laid out objections to the DeVos approach, including its narrow definition of sexual harassment and a provision allowing colleges to avoid responsibility for investigating complaints if they are not lodged with the right person.

“Addressing student safety, including the epidemic of sexual assault on campus, is a top priority,” Murray said in an interview this week. “If we are going to reauthorize [the Higher Education Act], this has to be part of it.”

Pair of Guam airmen face trial on sex offenses in unrelated cases

By Matthew M. Burke

Stars and Stripes, January 25, 2019

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — A pair of airmen assigned to Andersen Air Force Base on Guam face separate courts-martial there in the coming weeks for sexual and related offenses.

Trial is expected to start Feb. 11 for Tech. Sgt. Donald Frierson Jr. for the alleged 2017 sexual assault of a child in Germany, according to the Air Force court docket and a copy of his charge sheet.

In an unrelated case, Tech. Sgt. Jacory Royster is due in court Monday to start trial on charges of aggravated sexual assault, indecent language and solicitation, according to the docket and his charge sheet.

Both airmen are charged under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Trial for each man could last a week.

In Frierson's case, prosecutors allege he touched the buttocks of a 12-year-old girl through her clothing, kissed her back and touched her upper thighs.

The incidents allegedly took place between June and September 2017 at Ramstein Air Base, Germany.

Frierson is attached to the 36th Communications Squadron.

In Royster's case, prosecutors allege he touched a woman's back and buttocks with his hand, through her clothes and without her consent. He also allegedly touched the woman's leg with his leg, also without her consent.

According to the charge sheet, Royster did so with "intent to gratify his sexual desire, by causing bodily harm to her."

Royster also allegedly made sexually graphic remarks about the woman.

That incident allegedly occurred July 14 in Dededo, Guam.

Air Force officials said they would not be able to respond to requests seeking further information this week.

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<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2019/01/31/sexual-assault-harassment-up-nearly-50-percent-military-academies/2722712002/>

Sexual assault, harassment spikes at military academies, strategies fail to stem crisis

By Tom Vanden Brook

USA TODAY, January 31, 2019

WASHINGTON – Incidents of sexual assault at U.S. military academies spiked nearly 50 percent in the past school year despite years of focus on the problem and declarations of zero tolerance, according to results of a survey by the Pentagon.

The number of students reporting unwanted sexual contact totaled 747 in the 2017-18 academic year, compared with 507 in 2015-16, according to anonymous surveys of cadets and midshipmen. Unwanted sexual contact ranges from groping to rape.

"We're disheartened and disappointed that the things and the strategies that we've employed just really aren't getting the results that we want," Nathan Galbreath, deputy director of the Pentagon's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, told USA TODAY on Thursday.

About 16 percent of women and 2 percent of men at the premier military colleges reported being sexually assaulted, Galbreath said. The increase in assaults stems from more men and women at the Army's academy at West Point reporting unwanted sexual contact from men and women, and more women reporting at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. Reporting remained stable at the Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland.

[The survey](#) at the academies to determine the prevalence of sexual assault is done every other year. For the 2013-14 school year, 327 students responded that they had been victims of such contact, less than half the figure reported in the latest year.

"Alarm bells should be going off at our academies, the DoD and Congress," said Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif., who chairs the personnel panel on the House Armed Services Committee. "Clearly, what is being done to address sexual assault in our academies is not only not working, it has allowed assault rates to increase a staggering 47 percent."

About 50 percent of female students reported being sexually harassed in the 2017-18 school year, up from 48 percent in the previous report. Among men, 16 percent reported sexual harassment last year, compared with 12 percent in the previous report.

"That's not just a one-off comment or joke," Galbreath said. "Our measure on this survey aligns with policy and law in this area and helps us understand this is repeated unwanted behavior of a sexual nature, that is pervasive and severe, meaning it's repeated."

Despite the increase in sexual assaults on cadets and midshipmen, as the students are known, their willingness to lodge formal complaints has remained flat, Galbreath said. The 747 anonymous reports of sexual assaults generated only 92 formal complaints, Galbreath said, a rate of about 12 percent that has not changed.

"That's very concerning to us," he said.

Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., a member of the Armed Services Committee, said the reluctance among victims to report sexual assaults to authorities shows they lack confidence in the military's ability to prosecute the crimes and prevent retaliation. She proposed removing commanders' authority to prosecute those cases and have career lawyers make the decisions.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2019/01/31/sexual-assault-harassment-up-nearly-50-percent-military-academies/2722712002/>

"The answer to this scourge can't be the same answer we get every year of give us more time," Gillibrand said. "It's taking action."

About 12,900 students attend the Army, Navy and Air Force academies, 9,700 men and 3,200 women.

"Clearly, there's a cultural problem at the academies," said Don Christensen, the former top prosecutor for the Air Force and president of Protect Our Defenders, a group that advocates for victims of sexual assault in the military. "There have been decades of the academies downplaying sexual assault. There are almost zero consequences for someone who commits sexual assault there."

The factors driving the increase in assaults and harassment are not immediately clear from the data, Galbreath said. To combat the problem, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis ordered the armed services chiefs and academy leadership to focus on programs that emphasized responsible alcohol consumption, better prevention efforts, a culture of respect and improved reporting of assaults. The effect of those programs isn't entirely reflected in the new survey data, Galbreath said. Mattis resigned last year over foreign policy differences with President Donald Trump.

The #MeToo movement encouraged women to report sexual assault and harassment. The movement began in 2006 and gained momentum in 2017 amid allegations of sexual assault against high-profile men in entertainment, news media and politics. The 747 incidents of unwanted sexual contact at the academies were disclosed to researchers in a confidential survey, not necessarily reported to authorities for possible prosecution.

"The academies are grooming the next generation of military leaders," Christensen said. "They are supposed to be held to a higher standard. What message does this send to the troops they will be leading?"

In a report released last year on sexual assault at the academies, the Pentagon acknowledged that the problem had grown worse despite its efforts.

"Despite significant investments of attention, time, and resources, the 2016 estimated prevalence (occurrence) rate of unwanted sexual contact increased at all three academies, as compared to the rate measured two years prior," the report concluded. "In addition, rates of reporting sexual assault, perceived negative outcomes associated with reporting, and other measures showed only modest, if any, improvement in the climate pertaining to sexual assault and sexual harassment at the academies."

The military has waged a long battle to deal with sexual assault within its ranks. In 2013, the Pentagon released a report that estimated troops reporting unwanted sexual contact had jumped 35 percent from 2010 to 2012 – to 26,000 victims.

That report sparked intervention from Congress, which legislated changes on how sexual assault in the military was prosecuted and required enhanced care for victims.

The Pentagon issues a variety of reports tracking sexual assault among troops, and it commissions outside studies. In September 2018, the RAND Corp., a nonpartisan think tank, [issued a report](#) that found young women troops faced the highest risk of sexual assault, based on a survey of 170,000 active-duty troops.

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SEE ALSO:

[Academy sex assaults up 47% since 2016, DoD estimates](#) [*Military Times*, 2019-01-31]