

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.

House approves sweeping bill to expand gay rights [Matthew Daly, *The Associated Press*, 17 May 2019]

- Democrats in the House approved sweeping anti-discrimination legislation Friday that would extend civil rights protections to LGBT people by prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The protections would extend to employment, housing, loan applications, education, public accommodations, and other areas.
- Called the Equality Act, the bill is a top priority of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who said it will bring the nation “closer to equal liberty and justice for all.”
- Most Republicans oppose the bill and call it another example of government overreach. At a news conference Thursday, the Republicans said the bill would jeopardize religious freedom by requiring acceptance of a particular ideology about sexuality and sexual identity. President Donald Trump is widely expected to veto the legislation if it reaches his desk.

[House approves sweeping bill to expand gay rights](#)

McSally to introduce military sexual assault reform bill [Jordain Carney, *The Hill*, 14 May 2019]

- Sen. Martha McSally (R-Ariz.) said on Tuesday that she will introduce legislation to address how the military handles sexual assault claims, including making sexual harassment a stand-alone offense under the military’s criminal justice system.
- McSally’s legislation, according to a one-page summary, focuses on changes in four categories: prevention and training, victim support, investigation, and prosecution.
- Acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan said earlier this month that [sexual harassment would be made a criminal offense](#) at the recommendation of the Sexual Assault Accountability and Investigation Task Force, which was formed at McSally’s request.

[McSally to introduce military sexual assault reform bill](#)

West Point is about to graduate its largest class of Black women [Tony Marco, *CNN*, 15 May 2019]

- Thirty-four Black women are expected to graduate from West Point next week—the largest class of African-American women to graduate together in the military academy’s lengthy history, West Point spokesman Frank Demaro said.
- West Point’s graduating class is seeing diversity in other minority groups. “Also, this year’s class will have the highest number of female Hispanic graduates along with graduating our 5,000th female cadet [since the first class of women to graduate in 1980](#),” said Demaro.
- West Point created its office of diversity in 2014 to try to attract, retain, and promote a “more diverse workforce” according to its website.

[West Point is about to graduate its largest class of Black women](#)

DEOMI News Highlights

Culture

[He named his band the Slants to reclaim a slur. Not everyone approved.](#)

Discrimination

[House approves sweeping bill to expand gay rights](#)
[Op-Ed: Speak up for trans sailors, sound off for justice \[OPINION\]](#)

Diversity

[A cultural shift is helping keep talented mothers in the Navy](#)
[Female veterans want new caucus and clout in U.S. politics](#)
[A separate war: Pioneering Black Marines endured, prevailed](#)
[West Point is about to graduate its largest class of Black women](#)

Human Relations

[“Ned Stark” unveiled: Colonel who wrote viral leadership columns has a challenge for the Air Force](#)
[Streamlined officer school for SNCOs: Less shoe-shining, more leadership lessons](#)

Miscellaneous

[Birth Control Policies at Boot Camp Affect Military Readiness, Study Finds](#)
[Immigrant soldiers now denied U.S. citizenship at higher rate than civilians](#)
[Military recruitment, retention challenges remain, service chiefs say](#)

Misconduct

[Lt. Col. in charge of Corps’ 1st Recon was fired over “credible” allegations of domestic violence](#)
[Marine Corps punishes drill instructors and officers after hazing incidents](#)
[The Navy’s probe into sky penis](#)
[Two more Navy officers censured for Fat Leonard-related infractions](#)

Racism

[The Army just settled with a civilian who claims a sergeant major called her a “house \[N-word\]”](#)

Religion

[Dispute over Bible at Manchester VA hospital divides veterans](#)

Sexual Assault/Harassment

[In nude photo case, a commander dropped charges of conspiracy and abuse](#)
[McSally to introduce military sexual assault reform bill](#)
[Message to VA on sexual harassment: “Do better”](#)
[Report finds Ohio State doc abused 177, officials were aware](#)

Culture

He named his band the Slants to reclaim a slur. Not everyone approved.

By Diana Michele Yap

The Washington Post, May 16, 2019



Simon Tam is a musician and the author of “Slanted: How an Asian American Troublemaker Took on the Supreme Court.” (Sarah Giffrow)

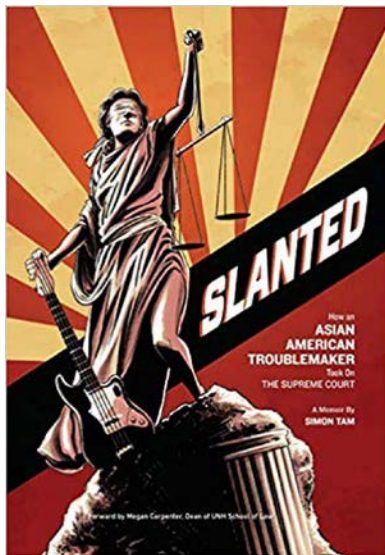
In middle school, Simon Tam was jumped by four older kids on the playground. They hit him on the back of his head with a basketball, then pushed him down hard into loose gravel. One of them threw sand at his face.

“Look at this Jap!” one shouted. “I can’t believe sand can even fit in those slits!” More insults, more laughter.

Tam stood up and blurted: “I’m a chink! Get it right! You guys are so stupid, you can’t even be racist right.” Astonished and confused, the bullies quit — and walked away.

Tam is still standing up for his principles. His compelling memoir, “Slanted: How an Asian American Troublemaker Took on the Supreme Court”, is about keeping true to his punk-rock heart and making history

through an eight-year fight to get a trademark registration from the government for his all-Asian American band’s name, the Slants. “Nobody starts a band thinking that they’re going to go to the Supreme Court,” he writes. But his book tells the fascinating and important tale of exactly how that happened to him — and what it means for others.



[Slanted: How an Asian American Troublemaker Took on the Supreme Court](#)

By Simon Tam.

Troublemaker Press. 326 pp. \$27

Tam grew up in Southern California, where his parents, who had immigrated from China and Taiwan, owned a restaurant. At 10, he chose to play bass, because he saw it as the underdog of rock band instruments. At 23, he decided — while watching Quentin Tarantino’s [“Kill Bill”](#) — to start an Asian American band. It was the first time he saw an American film that depicted “Asians as cool, confident and sexy,” he explains.

With a catchy Depeche Mode-inspired sound, the Slants sing politically pointed lyrics and are known for their community activism. In 2012, in a Portland, Ore., coffee shop, a rep from a major-label record company presented Tam with a \$4 million offer. But there was a hitch: He must replace the lead singer with someone white.

Tam thought of how his parents had sacrificed so much for him — and wanted him to be a man of values. He tore the contract in half.

He needed the money, but accepting those terms would undermine everything he’d been fighting for. By that time, Tam was three years into expensive legal proceedings. Tam had applied to register a trademark for the band’s name — a process a friend assured him would cost only a few hundred dollars and take a couple of months. But in the snowball-to-avalanche manner of life, this routine application led to “a crash

https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/he-named-his-band-the-slants-to-reclaim-a-slur-not-everyone-approved/2019/05/15/b939275a-700d-11e9-8be0-ca575670e91c_story.html

course in intellectual property law that would last longer than my undergraduate and graduate studies combined.”

[I'm not Salman Rushdie and other assumptions I'm tired of hearing at book events]

The Patent and Trademark Office rejected Tam’s application on the grounds that the band’s name is “disparaging.” Under Section 2(a) of the Lanham Act of 1946, trademarks could not be registered if they were considered disparaging to “a substantial composite of the referenced group.” Tam told his lawyer-friend that the Slants had done anti-racism work for years and that Asian Americans make up its biggest group of supporters. “Who did the Trademark Office say was actually offended by our name?” Tam asked. “No one. Not a single person,” his friend said. “But they did cite UrbanDictionary.com, and there are photos of Miley Cyrus pulling her eyes back in a slant-eye gesture.”

Tam appealed, after working to make sure that “the views of actual Asian Americans across the country” were used as evidence — legal declarations from “respected leaders of the Asian American community” and reports from the Asian American media that “celebrated the work of our band.” The Trademark Office rejected the appeal in December 2010. Tam wanted to drop the case — he was already skipping meals, and his credit cards were maxed out — but his attorney friend convinced him that the case was bigger than he was.

“The government believed that they were protecting Asian Americans from ourselves,” Tam writes. But “they were imposing their own ideas of justice and order on us, without actually consulting what we wanted. . . . That’s the ultimate privilege: being able to live in a world where you can determine what racism looks like for other people.”

Tam moved forward with his “battle for self-identity” and made it public, saying: “Let’s blow the doors open on this. Everyone should know what’s happening.” His trademark case went to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, where he won. The Department of Justice and the Trademark Office appealed the Federal Circuit decision. On Jan. 18, 2017, the Supreme Court heard *Matal v. Tam* as a First Amendment case. In June of that year, the court ruled unanimously in Tam’s favor.

[Now that Hollywood is interested in Asian stories, here are other books that should be movies]

Still, Tam struggled with the unintended consequences of the decision. The Federal Circuit court’s power to strike down the law could allow “more vile trademarks to be registered,” such as the Washington football team’s. “I didn’t take that choice lightly,” he writes. Policymakers and activists urged him to “focus on whatever would create more options for those who had the least. For me, that was the power of expression.”

For the last two years Tam has been speaking out about re-appropriation, which he defines as the process of reclaiming disparaging terms. “When communities co-opt terms for self-reference or self-empowerment, it’s saying *you can’t use that word against me. It belongs to me now*,” he explains. “In that sense, refusing to be defined by others is an act of creation. It is both activism and art.” He has also started a nonprofit, [the Slants Foundation](#), which aims to help Asian Americans “looking to incorporate activism into their art.” His nuanced book shows how he did just that.

Diana Michele Yap is a freelance writer in Washington. On May 28 at 7 p.m., [Simon Tam will be in conversation with Washington Post reporter Robert Barnes at Politics & Prose](#), 70 District Square SW.

Discrimination

House approves sweeping bill to expand gay rights

By Matthew Daly

The Associated Press, May 17, 2019



In this May 16, 2019, photo, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of Calif., speaks at the Capitol in Washington. Democrats in the House are poised to approve sweeping anti-discrimination legislation that would extend civil rights protections to LGBT people by prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Dubbed the Equality Act, the bill is a top priority of Pelosi, who said it will bring the nation “closer to equal liberty and justice for all.” (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats in the House approved sweeping anti-discrimination legislation Friday that would extend civil rights protections to LGBT people by prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The protections would extend to employment, housing, loan applications, education, public accommodations and other areas.

Called the Equality Act, the bill is a top priority of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who said it will bring the nation “closer to equal liberty and justice for all.”

Sexual orientation and gender identity “deserve full civil rights protections - in the workplace and in every place, education, housing, credit, jury service, public accommodations,” Pelosi said.

The vote was 236-173, with every Democrat voting in favor, along with eight Republicans. Cheers and applause broke out on the House floor as the bill crossed the threshold for passage.

The legislation’s chief sponsor, Rep. David Cicilline, D-R.I., said it affirms fairness and equality as core American values “and ensures members of the LGBTQ community can live their lives free from the fear of legal discrimination of any kind.”

Cicilline, who is gay, called equal treatment under the law a founding principle of the United States, adding “It’s absurd that, in 2019, members of the LGBTQ community can be fired from their jobs, denied service in a restaurant or get thrown out of their apartment because of their sexual orientation or gender identify.”

Most Republicans oppose the bill and call it another example of government overreach. Several GOP lawmakers spoke against it Friday on the House floor. President Donald Trump is widely expected to veto the legislation if it reaches his desk.

At a news conference Thursday, the Republicans said the bill would jeopardize religious freedom by requiring acceptance of a particular ideology about sexuality and sexual identity.

Rep. Vicky Hartzler, R-Mo., called the legislation “grossly misnamed” and said it is “anything but equalizing.”

The bill “hijacks” the 1964 Civil Rights Act to create “a brave new world of ‘discrimination’ based on undefined terms of sexual orientation and gender identity,” Hartzler said. The legislation threatens women’s sports, shelters and schools, and could silence female athletes, domestic abuse survivors and other women, she said.

A similar bill in the Senate has been co-sponsored by all but one Senate Democrat, but faces [long odds in the Republican-controlled chamber](#).

A Trump administration official who asked not be identified, because he was not authorized to speak publicly about the president’s intentions, said the White House “opposes discrimination of any kind and

<https://apnews.com/a64dc269b2864b89aad3e0d110f4f536>

supports the equal treatment of all. However, this bill in its current form is filled with poison pills that threaten to undermine parental and conscience rights.”

Some critics also said the bill could jeopardize Title IX, the law prohibiting sex discrimination in federally funded education programs. Former tennis star Martina Navratilova co-wrote [an opinion piece](#) in The Washington Post urging lawmakers not to “make the unnecessary and ironic mistake of sacrificing the enormously valuable social good that is female sports in their effort to secure the rights of transgender women and girls.”

Ahead of the vote, Rep. Jody Hice, R-Ga., called the House bill “horrifying” and said it could cause Catholic schools to lose federal grants for school lunches or require faith-based adoption agencies to place children with same-sex couples.

Neena Chaudhry, a lawyer for the National Women’s Law Center, said the bill does not undermine Title IX, because courts have already found that Title IX protects against gender-identity discrimination.

“It is way past time to fully open the doors of opportunity for every American,” said Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., one of the Senate bill’s lead sponsors. “Let’s pass the Equality Act, and let us rejoice in the bells of freedom ringing for every American.”

In the Senate, Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine also supports the bill, while Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia is the sole Democrat who is not a co-sponsor.

The eight House Republicans who voted for the bill Friday were Reps. Susan Brooks of Indiana, Mario Diaz-Balart of Florida, Brian Fitzpatrick of Pennsylvania, Will Hurd of Texas, Greg Walden of Oregon and New York lawmakers John Katko, Tom Reed and Elise Stefanik.

Op-Ed: Speak up for trans sailors, sound off for justice

By Midshipman 2nd Class Benjamin Chiacchia

Navy Times, May 13, 2019



From left, transgender military members Navy Lt. Cmdr. Blake Dremann, Army Capt. Alivia Stehlik, Army Capt. Jennifer Peace, Army Staff Sgt. Patricia King and Navy Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Akira Wyatt, prepare for the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Personnel hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington on Feb. 27. (Manuel Balce Ceneta/AP)

The Department of Defense continues to implement a plan to bar transgender service members from serving in their preferred [gender identity](#) or joining if they have experienced [gender dysphoria](#).

The Pentagon's ban fails transgender Americans, our military and our country by denying access to qualified individuals willing to defend democracy and serve the United States.

I've talked to some of these transgender sailors and have come to believe that it's time for members of the military to support them.

Proponents of the ban argue that it does not disqualify trans individuals from service. Rather, trans service members are required to serve in accordance with their biological sex and cannot have a diagnosed history of gender dysphoria.

Some — like retired Army Lt. Gen. [Thomas Spoehr](#) of the Heritage Foundation — have argued that the policy is not a ban because its language focuses on transitioning and gender dysphoria specifically. To Spoehr, this allows transgender service members to serve if they conform to the standards of their [biologically assigned sex](#).

However, the Pentagon policy is merely a return to discrimination with a veneer of inclusion. Basing the continued service of trans service members on their willingness to conform to a gender they do not identify with is tantamount to the forced closeting of [LGBT+](#) service members under the defunct “Don't Ask, Don't Tell” policy.

Waivers are available for those with a history of gender dysphoria, but transitioning remains proscribed, which contradicts conventional medical wisdom. Physicians view transitioning as an appropriate treatment for gender dysphoria. The directive is the functional equivalent of a blanket ban since it forces trans individuals to choose between love of country and their own well-being.

During the military's review period, some officials highlighted concerns about the effects of trans integration on unit cohesion, readiness, and lethality.

But these concerns have been undermined repeatedly by senior enlisted and commissioned military leaders.

Navy Chief Petty Officer [Melody Stachour](#) said that she has had positive experiences with her leadership and colleagues, which is reflective of the high degree of support for transgender members in today's military.

Retired Senior Chief Petty Officer [Kristin Beck](#) also pushed back on these arguments, adding that if anything inclusion softens biases through exposure. She took special exception to the lethality argument. A former SEAL in the Naval Special Warfare Development Group, Senior Chief Beck asked, “If I'm not lethal, then what is?”



Wes Phillips weighs in on Oct. 6 prior to the International Association of Trans Bodybuilders competition in Atlanta, Georgia. Phillips, an active-duty sailor, won the competition. (David Goldman/AP)

Integration of transgender troops may present limited administrative difficulties, as all changes do. However, just as the military now recognizes it is wrong to deny women the opportunity to serve despite the required changes, it is wrong to prioritize convenience over the interests of transgender Americans.

This is especially true since preventing enlistment won't prevent the military from paying for treatment. Let's say that a sailor is diagnosed with gender dysphoria while in the Navy. The service member would have access to transition-related medical care while being processed out of the military at the same time.

Inclusion might incur an additional cost, but access to the talent and expertise of transgender service members is worth that accommodation.

Nor should the charge of "social experimentation" hold the weight it so often does. Any action taken within the military reverberates through American society at large, as occurred when President Harry S. Truman [integrated the military in 1948](#).

If you say that Truman's correct decision to integrate was a social experiment, so too would have been a decision to not integrate the armed forces in the midst of vast social changes.

In our republic, the military and society influence each other constantly, which prevents neutrality on social issues in the armed forces. A concerted effort to expand inclusion to previously disenfranchised groups is not a nefarious form of social experimentation; but depriving the military of talented people because of stereotypes and biases would be.

Spoehr and others also support the ban because the military is an organization based on standards. However, rather than assess qualification on a case-by-case basis, the directive proscribes anyone whose gender identity differs from their biological sex or who experiences gender dysphoria from military service.

"There is a wide arc of gender dysphoria, and it varies person to person," explained Senior Chief Beck. "A headache and a migraine can have the same cause, but there's an important difference in severity."



Petty Officer 2nd Class Taryn McLean looks in the mirror. Taryn was born female but identifies as male. He was among 11,000 transgender active duty and reserve troops that the RAND Corp. estimated are serving in the armed forces. (Kristen Zeis/The Virginian-Pilot via AP)

The policy makes service impossible for those who could perform their duties with appropriate care or after transitioning. This is not enforcing a standard. This is exclusion masked by a facade of policy.

At its core, the ban is an issue of leadership. It has created a civil rights issue not very different from the causes that have benefited women and people of color in the past. Many of the leadership principles that form the core of our service are in stark contrast to this ban and the perspective it represents.

We are instructed to set the example, yet this ban is the opposite of the example our organization should set. We ought to promote the ideals of America and an *esprit de corps* rooted in a shared mission, purpose, and set of standards.

<https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2019/05/13/op-ed-speak-up-for-trans-sailors-sound-off-for-justice/>

We are instructed to keep our people informed, but years of planning and education have been squandered by the reinstatement of this ban. We must train our teams to understand the reality of a warfare environment that will always include transgender individuals.

We are instructed to know our people and look out for their welfare, but this policy tells us to do the opposite. Our organization now asks our people to live a lie for our sake without regard to their well-being.

We are asked to know ourselves and seek self-improvement before extending this effort to the institution we serve. We are capable of doing better.

The nature of the military places some limits on what actions we can take. Chief Stachour made it clear that so long as the policy is on the books, it remains the obligation of service members to follow it.

Such is the nature of joining the military; sometimes we must follow policies we disagree with because of our duty to the Constitution and our mission. However, this does not preclude strong action in favor of promoting change.

Voting with this issue in mind and contacting members of Congress are both vital ways to correct our course. This is not a partisan move or a call based on the promotion of any ideology. All elected officials rely on the views of their constituents to inform policy imperatives and to maintain their office. By making this issue salient in the minds of policymakers, change can be promoted through legislation and political support.

But deference to elected officials is not enough. In order for change to happen, we need to make our voices heard in climate surveys, through the use of inclusive language, and through concerted efforts to appeal to senior leadership to enact necessary changes.

The military might be a hierarchy, but that does not prevent service members from highlighting bad policies and defending transgender personnel from discrimination.

It is our duty as members of the military to look out for our peers. By saying nothing and doing nothing to change this policy, we are failing in that mission.

As one sailor told me, “a lot of the people that I know who say things like ‘support our troops’ [and support the ban] have never served themselves. I think that even one person making a simple statement about supporting *all* troops would go a long way and could start the dialogue that may end up changing some people’s minds about us.”

Our military is an institution with enormous responsibility, but it has always maintained a can-do attitude. We can and should make this integration work, not simply for the sake of trans Americans, but for the sake of our whole country.

The trans community makes our nation and military stronger, more diverse, and more resilient. As Chief Stachour observed, “The policy won’t last forever. The ban is not the end of transgender people serving in the military. It is a pause.”

I believe it is incumbent on members of the military to keep that pause as short as possible by making our voices heard in the Capitol and the Pentagon.

To the many transgender veterans, service members, and eager patriots who will one day serve, thank you for all that you do. We owe you a debt of gratitude.

Midshipman 2nd Class [Benjamin Chiacchia](#) is a junior at Brown University, where he studies political science, history and the Middle East. His views do not necessarily reflect those of Navy Times or its staffers.

Diversity

A cultural shift is helping keep talented mothers in the Navy

By Brock Vergakis

The Virginian-Pilot (Norfolk, Va.), May 12, 2019



Navy Lt. Cmdr. Karen Sankes-Ritland, the training officer aboard the aircraft carrier Bush, reads to her son, Trevor, 6, for a few minutes before leaving for school Friday morning, May 10, 2019. Bill Tiernan/For The Virginian-Pilot.

NORFOLK — Lt. Cmdr. Karen Sankes-Ritland never imagined life outside the military.

Her father was a Marine. Her husband is an explosive ordnance disposal officer. She's a Naval Academy graduate.

But more than a decade into her career, the strains of family life and a dual-military household were taking a toll. Her father had recently died, her third child needed open-heart surgery and she was pregnant with her fourth child. Meanwhile, her husband was scheduled to deploy soon.

"I just felt like I was starting to drown," she said.

Something had to change. She needed a break. But she didn't want to leave the Navy.

So after her fourth child's arrival in 2016, she took advantage of a program that lets enlisted sailors and officers take a sabbatical. For a year, she was a stay-at-home mom.

"I will forever be grateful for that year off because that was a very important time for me to be able to spend that time with my very young children," she said. "And I can tell you stay-at-home moms definitely have a really tough job. Very tough, but very rewarding."

She returned to the Navy in 2017 and now serves as the training officer aboard the aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush. The time off rejuvenated her. She said it made her a better officer.

"If I had stayed in, I honestly don't think I would be where I'm at right now," she said. "And that's due to needing the ability to take care of my family. And if I can't take care of my personal life, it would be very hard for me to perform in my professional life."



Navy Lt. Cmdr. Karen Sankes-Ritland, the training officer aboard the aircraft carrier Bush, laces up her boots Friday morning, May 10, 2019 at the family's home in Norfolk as she prepares to take her four children to school on her way to work aboard the ship. In the background is her son, Trevor, 6, and her youngest daughter, Kelsey, 3. Bill Tiernan/For The Virginian-Pilot.

Sankes-Ritland is one of 217 sailors who have used or are using the Career Intermission Program since it was first offered as a pilot program in 2009, with 79 of those choosing to take time off for family reasons that could include having or adopting a child or taking care of an ill parent, according to Naval Personnel Command. Sailors can take up to three years off, but must serve an additional month after they return for every month they've been gone.

The program is one of a series of changes the Navy has recently made to be more accommodating to working parents in an effort to retain talented sailors. Surveys show the top reasons people leave the service are the Navy's impact on the family, on their ability to have or adopt children and work-life balance.

But some working mothers say they've seen a cultural shift over the past 20 years in how leadership treats sailors with children. A 2018 survey indicated that women planning to remain in the Navy were more likely to have children than those who are undecided or planning to separate from the service.

https://pilotonline.com/news/military/local/article_d860603c-7326-11e9-b69d-4f92d082aa0b.html

In recent years the Navy has extended the hours child care is available, doubled its maternity leave to 12 weeks and removed the 40 person cap on the number of people who can go on sabbatical each year. Leaders — many of whom are women with children — are also being taught the importance of making sure those they're in charge of are taking care of their home lives so they're not distracted on a job where lives are at stake. Sometimes, the Navy now says, a family issue needs to take priority.

"The bottom line is that women can be wives, mothers and Sailors all at the same time," said Lt. Cmdr. Jessica McNulty, a spokeswoman for Navy Recruiting Command, which is specifically targeting women to join the service.

Other efforts to be more supportive include an update to the Navy's Pregnancy and Parenthood Mobile App, the creation of a "Breastfeeding in the Navy" campaign and a new Command Advisor on Pregnancy and Parenthood that's designed to support parents and normalize conversations on parenthood in the Navy, according to Chief of Naval Personnel spokesman Lt. j.g. Stuart Phillips.



Chief Renea Powers poses for a picture with her children. Kids left to right: Caden age 11, Ollie age 17, Tommy age 4. Courtesy of Thomas Powers.

Chief Petty Officer Renea Powers, a Virginia Beach-based Riverine with three children ages 17 to 4, said the Navy treated working mothers much differently when she had her first child.

"It wasn't very conducive to women wanting to stay in. A lot of the females around me who were pregnant, like as soon as they had their baby and their time was up, they were getting out," Powers said.

Powers had praise for the extended hours and level of care offered at the Navy's child development centers, as well as how affordable they are. Sailors are charged on a sliding scale based on their pay, but it's not uncommon for sailors to pay half the price for daycare that they would at a comparable accredited private facility.

Powers sends her youngest child to one of the Navy's centers. The only problem is that the centers can't handle more children, she said. Wait lists to get in are common. Each center maintains low caretaker-to-child ratios and they're limited in how many children they can accept.

The one for Naval Station Norfolk can handle 300 children and is at capacity. The wait list has 300 names on it. The children of active-duty sailors and single parents get priority.

The Navy also offers a 24/7 care program for sailors who work overnight watches. That program can handle 20 children and offers to certify in-home caretakers that may allow children to have more personal attention closer to where they live.

Chief Petty Officer Sheri Bergeman, who works at Fleet Forces Command in Norfolk, was someone who thought about getting out of the Navy after she had the first of her three children. But she stayed in largely because she and her husband still had contracts to serve and she was able to transfer to shore duty. When she had her first two children, she only got six weeks off.

But for her third child, she got 12 weeks.

"It's important to have that additional time for bonding. So six weeks, you're going back to work, you kind of have a little bit of resentment, like 'Oh my gosh, I don't spend this time with my baby.' Your mind is not at work," she said. "You're there, but you're really not focused."

https://pilotonline.com/news/military/local/article_d860603c-7326-11e9-b69d-4f92d082aa0b.html

Bergeman would spend her lunch hours at the daycare with her baby. "Because that's where my heart was. That's where my mind was."



Chief Petty Officer Sheri Bergeman poses for a picture with her family. Courtesy of J. Brown.

For her, the Navy's new extended leave policy also came with another benefit: paternity leave. For her third child, her husband was also able to take time off work and take some of the burden off her.

"You have a baby and you're tired," she said. "You're up all that time. So having them there to be able to care for the baby and, you know, be awake — that's huge."

Since June, the Navy also has offered more flexibility in its parental leave policy by allowing whoever the primary caregiver is to take six weeks off even if it's not the birth parent. It also increased time off for the secondary caregiver from 10 days to 14.

The service "recognizes the diversity of our Navy families," Phillips said. "As our dual-military, dual-income, same-sex and single parent families continue to grow, so must our focus on family-friendly policies."

Bergeman said she'd like to see the Navy help more women who can't have children by paying for in vitro fertilization.

"Right now that's not covered," she said. "I think that would be huge because there are a lot of women that want to have children that can't. I'd like to see the Navy actually support that."

Sankes-Ritland believes the Navy is on the right track. She's especially a fan of the sabbatical program.

"I am a huge proponent of it," she said.

She talks up the program to other women sailors, especially single moms: "I always let them know that there are these opportunities and resources everywhere in the Navy that you can take advantage of."



Navy Lt. Cmdr. Karen Sankes-Ritland, the training officer aboard the aircraft carrier Bush, holds her youngest daughter, Kelsey, 3, Friday morning, May 10, 2019 on the front porch of their Norfolk home with Kailey, 7, Trevor, 6, and Kaira, 5. Bill Tiernan/For The Virginian-Pilot.

[Brock Vergakis](#) writes about the military for The Virginian-Pilot. He joined the newspaper in 2015.

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Female veterans want new caucus and clout in US politics

By Laurie Kellman

The Associated Press, May 15, 2019



In this April 2, 2019, file photo, Rep. Chrissy Houlahan, D-Pa., arrives for a House Armed Services Committee budget hearing for the Departments of the Army and Air Force on Capitol Hill in Washington. Congresswomen with military service in their past, some of them forged on post-Sept. 11 wars, are hoping to create their own caucus to drive an agenda to support the nation's growing ranks of female service members. (AP Photo/Andrew Harnik, File)

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congresswomen who have served in the military are setting up a new caucus to support the nation's growing ranks of female service members, and they're looking for clout, too, in American politics.

The caucus, bipartisan and including men, would be a first.

There are more than a dozen military and veteran-related caucuses in the House, but none dedicated to the specific needs of women who serve. The still-forming Congressional Servicewomen & Women Veterans Caucus, which organizers said Wednesday includes 50 members of Congress, is part of this group's growing network of influence in national politics.

Organizers also are aiming to recruit more female veterans to run for office in 2020.

"It's a long time coming," said Rep. Chrissy Houlahan, D-Pa., an Air Force veteran and third-generation service member who is also among the historic class of House freshmen that delivered a Democratic majority in last year's elections.

She recalls leaving the military in 1991, after she and her husband had a baby, because she could not afford child care in Boston, where they were living. "What I've learned nearly 30 years later is that it hasn't changed."

But child care isn't the only concern of the group, which Houlahan hopes will eventually include senators who have served. Educating women on the veterans' health care and other services that are available to them also is on the agenda, as well as delivering and expanding on those services.

In the next 25 years, the number of female former service members is expected to nearly double and will account for nearly 1 in 5 living veterans. That's because the number of enlisted women serving is eight times more than it was when the draft ended, in 1973, according to statistics released from Houlahan's group. Women now account for 18 percent of the officer corps, up from 8 percent.

Female veterans face unique health-related challenges, according to letters the future caucus members have sent to Army Secretary Mark T. Esper and Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer. The caucus wants all the services to follow the model of an Air Force pilot program that offers four hours of training on the health services offered by the VA to women leaving the military.

Joining Houlahan at a news conference Wednesday were Reps. Tulsi Gabbard, D-Hawaii; Elaine Luria, D-Va.; Mikie Sherrill, D-N.J.; Don Bacon, R-Neb.; and Gil Cisneros, D-Calif. The caucus is awaiting final approval in the House and could become official as soon as this week.

"We did not want to be the last people to fill these shoes" as female veterans and members of Congress, Luria said. "We're here to stand behind these young women."

<https://apnews.com/59f4768cc1474e0e874a2456c25bf5f4>

Houlahan, Luria and Sherrill were part of a record number of female veterans with military or intelligence experience who ran for Congress last year. They're raising money together for potential candidates in 2020 with military experience through Service First Women's Victory Fund and New Politics, a bipartisan organization.

Follow Kellman on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/APLaurieKellman>

A separate war: Pioneering black Marines endured, prevailed

By Tom Foreman Jr.

The Associated Press, May 17, 2019



In this photo taken April 3, 2019, former Montford Point Marine John Thompson speaks during an interview at his home in Greensboro, N.C. It was the dress blue uniforms that drew Thompson to join the U.S. Marines, where black men were not welcome, so he could defend a country that denied him the rights he wanted to fight for. (AP Photo/Chuck Burton)

[Watch AP Video](#)

GREENSBORO, N.C. (AP) — It was the dress blue uniforms that drew John Thompson to join the U.S. Marines, where black men were not welcome, so he could defend a country that denied him the rights he wanted to fight for.

“I said, ‘Wow, that’s a real pretty uniform,’” recalls Thompson, now 94.

It took President Franklin Roosevelt’s 1941 executive order banning discrimination in government and defense industry employment because of “race, creed, color, or national origin” to give the teenage son of black South Carolina sharecroppers a chance to serve as a Marine during World War II.

Just not alongside whites.

The first African Americans admitted to the Marine Corps after Roosevelt’s order were put in segregated units, starting with their training. At a swampy, bug-infested camp called Montford Point, adjacent to but separate from Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, they endured indignities — but they also paved the way for others who came after.

Thompson, who enlisted in 1943, was among them. The Marines were the only military branch for him, after he saw their uniforms on newsreels at the black theater where he sold popcorn and after two of his friends joined the Corps themselves.

“The Marine Corps is an elite group. I wanted to belong to an elite group. That was my feeling,” said Thompson, who lives in Greensboro, North Carolina.

Thompson, now a retired teacher, is one of an estimated 400 still living from among the approximately 20,000 men who trained at Montford Point.

In Jim Crow-era Kannapolis, North Carolina, where Thompson was raised, black men were mostly relegated to low-paying jobs at a textile mill and black women weren’t hired at all, he recalled. Blacks had to go to a restaurant’s back door to be served.

As his friends were drafted, one by one, Thompson told his father he wanted to join the service.

“There had been only two blacks in town to go to the Marine Corps, and that had been within the last five or six months before I first started talking to my dad about it,” he recalled.

But racial segregation ruled out Marine training for black recruits at Parris Island, South Carolina, where whites were trained.

“During that time, they didn’t want blacks to belong to elite groups,” Thompson said. “I wanted to belong to an elite group because, at the time, I didn’t think there was a teenager anywhere in the nation any more physically fit than I was.”

<https://apnews.com/7bcc0a1ed1f148b88ab6f76afa8a2697>

Thompson and the other black would-be Marines were sent to Montford Point. Separated from Lejeune by railroad tracks that they weren't allowed to cross, Thompson said it was like the racial separation back at home.

"Mind you, I was in a segregated society," Thompson said. "I knew nothing else. It was a way of life."

The new recruits' fatigues weren't folded and didn't fit, Thompson said. When their first day's training was done, they had no real barracks either.

"We had huts to live in. The walls were one board thick, and they looked as if you could ram your fist through a wall," Thompson said. "In the middle of the hut was one oil stove. We had to supply that stove with buckets to keep that stove going."

When their training began, the black recruits served entirely under the command of white men.

"We had white sergeants ... Most of them were Southerners with heavy accents. We only had two or three sergeants from the North," Thompson said. "It was because they wanted to treat us less than any white person who had ever been in the Marine Corps."

Thompson said the sergeants didn't use outright racial epithets, but they would often refer to the black recruits as "you people," which he considered "subtle expressions" of racism.

Yet in a training course notorious for weeding out all but the strongest, Thompson endured their rough tutelage and even thrived.

"This training lasted for two months," he said. "I was made a squad leader. I never did have to do any KP while I was in the service because I was a squad leader and squad leaders didn't go to the kitchen."

He said he and his comrades helped one another stay strong in the face of challenges. When off duty, they would compete against each other on the drill field to see who was fastest.

"I always tried to outdo the other guys," Thompson said.

But even a Marine uniform won a black man no respect.

"Everything was done separately. At the bus station, we would get in line to get on the bus. We had to go all the way to the back of the bus," he said. "We never could sit up front unless the bus was completely full of black people."

The black Marines' duties in World War II were confined mainly to dispensing ammunition and retrieving the wounded from the front lines. Thompson didn't see combat, but others did.

Historians say the government initially planned to discharge the black Marines after World War II. But in 1948, President Harry Truman issued an order fully desegregating the U.S. armed forces. Today the Marine Corps is [about 11 percent black](#) — still low among the services, but a seismic shift ahead of the World War II-era.

Montford Point Camp was decommissioned on Sept. 9, 1949. On April 19, 1974, it was renamed Camp Johnson in honor of the late Sgt. Maj. Gilbert H. "Hashmark" Johnson — a Marine legend and one of the first black men who eventually were trained as Marine drill instructors. Today it's the only Marine Corps installation named in honor of an African American. A memorial honoring the pioneering Montford Point Marines was dedicated there in 2016.

In 2011, then-President Barack Obama signed a law awarding all Montford Point Marines the Congressional Gold Medal.

Some of those medals were awarded posthumously.

"We went through a lot and we realized we went through a lot," Thompson said. "This is just a small token of what we went through."

West Point is about to graduate its largest class of black women

By Tony Marco
CNN, May 15, 2019



History in the making: These cadets will be among 34 African-American women who will graduate with the Class of 2019 from the United States Military Academy West Point.

(CNN)Thirty-four black women are expected to graduate from West Point next week.

That will be the largest class of African-American women to graduate together in the military academy's lengthy history, West Point spokesman Frank Demaro said.

"Last year's graduating class had 27," said Demaro. "And the expectation is next year's class will be even larger than this year's."

Last year, the school appointed [Lt. Gen. Darryl A. Williams](#) as its first black [superintendent](#).

In 2017, the academy for the first time selected an African-American woman, Simone Askew, [to serve at the top of the chain of command](#) for cadets.

"It makes me feel prideful that the academy is acknowledging diversity," 2012 West Point alum Shalela Dowdy said.

Dowdy, who said she makes an effort to stay in touch with female African-American cadets to "offer support," believes the outreach the minority admissions office at West Point is doing is the reason why more minorities are coming to the school.

"There were only 13 in my class, I just counted, but the numbers keep going up and up. It's encouraging and inspiring to see leaders graduating from the school that are from all different kinds of backgrounds and represent the diversity of the army itself," said Dowdy.

West Point's graduating class is seeing diversity in other minority groups. "Also, this year's class will have the highest number of female Hispanic graduates along with graduating our 5,000th female cadet since [the first class of women to graduate in 1980](#)," said Demaro.

Cadet Tiffany Welch-Baker, spoke to the website "[Because Of Them We Can](#)," about her feelings about being a part of this historic graduating class.

"My hope when young black girls see these photos is that they understand that regardless of what life presents you, you have the ability and fortitude to be a force to be reckoned with."

West Point created its office of diversity in 2014 to try to attract, retain and promote a "more diverse workforce" according to its website.

About 10% of undergraduate students are black and women make up about 20% of cadets, according to the school's statistics.

Vice President Mike Pence will speak at the graduation ceremony on May 25, according to a news release from the academy. "More than 950 cadets are expected to graduate from the U.S. Military Academy and be commissioned as second lieutenants in the US Army," according to the release.

Human Relations

‘Ned Stark’ unveiled: Colonel who wrote viral leadership columns has a challenge for the Air Force

By Stephen Losey

Air Force Times, May 14, 2019



Col. Jason Lamb, director of intelligence, analysis and innovation at Air Education and Training Command, last year wrote a series of columns on Air Force leadership under the pen name "Col. Ned Stark." (Ben Murray/Air Force Times)

His pseudonymous columns on problems with the [Air Force's leadership development](#) sliced through years of ossified thinking like a Valyrian steel greatsword.

They went viral across the service, drew plaudits for their straight talk about how leaders are really chosen — and even got the attention of [Chief of Staff Gen. Dave Goldfein](#).

Now, the anonymous officer known as "Col. Ned Stark" has come forward as Col. Jason Lamb, a career intelligence officer and leader at Air Education and Training Command. And he has a challenge for the Air Force: Continue the hard, overdue conversation he started — be bold and be frank, because the [next generation is at stake](#).

"I think what I've done, more than anything, is brought something that was being discussed — and demotivating people — on the periphery into a thing that we can actually talk about openly," Lamb said in a May 6 interview at Air Force Times' newsroom in Northern Virginia. "My mom once told me when I was a kid, you should always leave the party while you're still having fun."

Lamb said he's decided to reveal himself now — almost exactly a year after [War on the Rocks](#) published his first column, "[A Call for Senior Officer Reform in the Air Force: An Insider's Perspective](#)" — because he thinks he's said everything he can under the Ned Stark persona, and by going public, he can help guide the conversation into its next phase. Lamb's identity was first revealed on a [War on the Rocks podcast](#) Monday.

Lamb thinks that's the only way the Air Force can move beyond small-ball, baby-stepping solutions, toward something that really changes the service for the better.

"The Air Force really struggles with candor," Lamb said. "The entire system incentivizes risk avoidance. What we see as risk these days, really speaks to our problem with risk avoidance. When we stand up and applaud when a wing commander chooses not to abide by an Air Force Instruction because he thinks it's silly, that's seen as a huge victory."

Lamb, who is now director of intelligence, analysis and innovation at Air Education and Training Command at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph in Texas, graduated from the Air Force Academy in 1995. His father was a Marine Corps non-commissioned officer who fought in the Korean War, and he thinks that's where he got his lack of tolerance for BS.

Although he is seriously considering retirement next year, though he hasn't made a final decision, Lamb said he has loved serving in the Air Force and, as a squadron and then group commander, tried to improve it where he could.

- [‘Ned Stark,’ whose leadership op-eds created a stir, is considering chief of staff's job offer](#)

<https://www.airforcetimes.com/news/your-air-force/2019/05/14/ned-stark-unveiled-colonel-who-wrote-viral-leadership-columns-has-a-challenge-for-the-air-force/>

But over the years, beginning when he was a captain, Lamb's frustrations built as he pieced together how things really worked. He grew troubled by the way the Air Force deemed certain officers "high potential" early on, promoted them early and fast-tracked them into leadership positions. When some of those fast burners displayed flaws, however, the Air Force failed to hold them accountable, admit its mistake and correct course, he said.

The uninspired, or even toxic leadership that grew in some places had broader, disastrous effects, he said. Over the years, Lamb saw one talented officer after another reach the end of his rope and, frustrated, leave the service.



Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Dave Goldfein made Ned Stark's column required reading at the Corona meeting of top Air Force officers last June and offered Col. Jason Lamb, it's author, a job on his staff. (Cpl. Samantha Braun/Marine Corps)

"People were burned out, leaving in droves," Lamb said. "You couldn't get them to stay in."

That's not to say the Air Force doesn't have some outstanding leaders, he said. It does. He believes Goldfein is one of them.

But even when toxic or misbehaving commanders do get investigated and fired, Lamb says, there's no process for reviewing how those commanders got chosen in the first place, to see whether the selection process missed warning signs or went wrong, and what can be improved.

"There are no consequences for any of the senior folks who pushed those people for command," Lamb said. "Nobody ends up in command without someone sponsoring them, vouching for them, recommending them."

At the same time, he saw other officers who were not selected for early advancement at the beginning of their careers — though they may have later developed into exceptional leaders — get left behind.

When he raised his concerns to peers, mentors and supervisors, he said they'd nod and agree — but nothing ever changed. You're absolutely right, they'd tell him — but this is the system we live in. And from his perspective, the powers that be showed little inclination to fix things.

"Once a system gets in place, the people who benefit from that system seek to perpetuate the system — 'It obviously worked, because it selected me,' " Lamb said. "I'm idealistic, inherently, but I'm a realist by training. But I'm continually surprised, and sometimes let down, by our inability to actually fix ourselves. And the higher up I went, the less there seemed to be any sense of urgency or need to reform anything."

- [Commentary: Wanted: Leaders we can believe in](#)

His frustrations spilled over early last year when he realized that not only was nothing changing, but things were probably getting worse over time and, even as a group commander, there was surprisingly little he could do to make improvements.

He reached out to Steve Leonard, the retired Army colonel who now satirizes the military online as Doctrine Man, and vented. With Leonard's encouragement, Lamb wrote a sprawling — even ranting — initial draft of his first column. He then tightened up and edited down his piece, and sent it to [War on the Rocks](#).

Lamb, who at the time was a group commander at the 544th Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Group at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado, knew that publishing these thoughts under his own name would be career suicide. So Lamb — a big "Game of Thrones" fan — adopted the name of the show's noble, doomed hero, who spoke truth to power and paid the price with his head.

<https://www.airforcetimes.com/news/your-air-force/2019/05/14/ned-stark-unveiled-colonel-who-wrote-viral-leadership-columns-has-a-challenge-for-the-air-force/>

When his first piece dropped last May 14, it went viral. Lamb then expanded on his critiques with subsequent columns on [War on the Rocks](#) and Air Force Times.

A wide variety of theories about Ned Stark's true identity were bandied about in the Air Force. Lamb found it very telling that so many airmen, from all sorts of different career fields, were absolutely convinced "Ned" was one of them. He even heard a theory that Ned Stark was really a female mobility pilot.

Via an anonymous "Eddard Stark" Gmail address he set up, Lamb heard stories from airmen across the Air Force who were seeing the same problems he was.



Lt. Gen. Jacqueline D. Van Ovost, Air Force director of staff, takes a moment away from Corona South in February 2018 to recognize top performers at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala. (Donna Burnett/Air Force)

"I can't even tell you the number of people who wrote me," Lamb said. "Good gravy, a lot of people wrote in."

He also got the attention of Gen. Goldfein, who made Lamb's first column required reading for top Air Force leaders at last summer's Corona meeting. Goldfein posted his own open letter last August on War on the Rocks, comparing Lamb's column to the famous "Dear Boss, I Quit" letter penned in 1979 by then Air Force Capt. Ron Keys, who went on to make general and head Air Combat Command. Goldfein said he agreed with parts of what Lamb said, encouraged him to keep writing — and offered him clemency and a job.

"Ned, I can assure you your head is safe," Goldfein wrote.

Lamb spoke with Goldfein and seriously considered his offer, but ultimately decided not to come to Washington to avoid disrupting his family with another move.

But though he stayed in San Antonio, Lamb continued to consult with the personnel team at Air Force headquarters — whom he called "some really sharp, impressive folks" — and helped work on changes to the officer development process. He says recently announced changes, such as streamlining the promotion recommendation form, are on the right track.

In his columns, Lamb made several suggestions for improvement, such as 360-degree feedback evaluations in which subordinates review their commanders as part of an officer's permanent record.

- [Commentary: The Air Force is not designed to produce good leaders](#)

But after talking to professional personnelists such as Col. Fred Thaden, director of the Air Force talent management innovation cell, Lamb has softened his stance slightly. He's now trying to be less prescriptive about what he thinks specifically needs to be done, and talk more about the goals that need to be met.

"I'm a bit like the person who spent too much time on WebMD," Lamb said. "At some point, you need to turn it over to the professionals."

The Air Force is starting to take tentative steps forward now, Lamb said. But the process is slow, he said, and there's no time to waste. Potential major changes to the evaluation and promotion systems would likely take three to five years to take effect, once they begin to go into place.

While "quick wins" are nice to build confidence, he said, big changes are what's needed.

Since the endgame Lamb seeks is to grow a new generation of better leaders in the Air Force — which will take years, and perhaps decades — the service needs to start as soon as possible, and not waste several more years debating things in committee.

<https://www.airforcetimes.com/news/your-air-force/2019/05/14/ned-stark-unveiled-colonel-who-wrote-viral-leadership-columns-has-a-challenge-for-the-air-force/>

Only by shaking off its risk-averse culture can the Air Force start producing the officers it needs, he said.

“Speak plainly,” Lamb said. “Say what you mean. Let’s talk it out, let’s have a discussion of the pros and cons. And then for the love of God, let’s make a decision and move out.”

[Stephen Losey](#) covers leadership and personnel issues as the senior reporter for Air Force Times. He comes from an Air Force family, and his investigative reports have won awards from the Society of Professional Journalists. He has traveled to the Middle East to cover Air Force operations against the Islamic State.

Streamlined officer school for SNCOs: Less shoe-shining, more leadership lessons

By Stephen Losey

Air Force Times, May 14, 2019



Second Lt. Kristin Gwitt holds a sabre at the position of attention while basic officer trainees salute during the playing of the National Anthem as part of an Officer Training School graduation parade in 2008. The Air Force is experimenting with an accelerated commissioning program for OTS, which seeks to allow senior non-commissioned officers to earn their commission in 14 training days, as opposed to the usual 40 days. (Air Force)

By the time [senior non-commissioned officers](#) in the Air Force hit the point where they could [earn their commissions](#), they know how things work around the service.

“They know how to march, they know how to shine shoes,” said Brig. Gen. William Spangenthal, director of operations and communications for Air Education and Training Command, in a May 10 interview. “They know how to salute, they know the basics of being an airman. And not only do they know them, they have been outstanding at it.”

So, when those master sergeants, senior master sergeants and chief master sergeants start trying to [earn their commissions and become officers](#), Spangenthal said, it wouldn’t make much sense to waste days — even weeks — re-drilling them on basic concepts they’ve been doing for years.

That’s why AETC is about to start testing a new accelerated commissioning program for Officer Training School at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama, which aims to get SNCOs their commission in 14 training days, as opposed to the usual 40 days. With weekends off, the 14 training days will equate to nearly three weeks on the calendar.

Command officials on May 1 announced the fast-tracked program, which will hold its first test class in August and its second in October. The first test will include 36 SNCOs — 26 active duty, five reservists and five Air National Guard members — who completed the SNCO Academy course and were selected through a normal board process. If it’s successful, it could help the Air Force develop new ways to create officers that gives them credit for the knowledge and experience they already bring to the table.

- [Become an officer in 14 days? Air Force to test accelerated commissioning program for SNCOs](#)

The new, streamlined program will essentially drop Stages 1 and 2 of OTS — the indoctrination and developmental phases — and will instead work more on learning “how to transition from the mindset of an NCO to the mindset of a commissioned officer,” said Col. Peter Bailey, the commander of OTS.

“Our 14 days, for the most part, is going to be solely driven on higher level, or graduate-level, leadership development,” Bailey said. “Which is something everybody should get, but the 14-day course will be focused on that.”

Spangenthal said he hopes the revised schedule will get SNCOs into training sooner, and will motivate them by taking their years of experience into account.

“We have the best-trained NCOs in the world, the best enlisted corps in the world,” Spangenthal said. “We took the best-trained airmen, selected from the very best that were going to OTS, and then down-selected so that we could improve upon what we’re already doing. I believe that not only will this be successful, we will have a better airman at the other end of that.”

<https://www.airforcetimes.com/news/your-air-force/2019/05/14/streamlined-officer-school-for-sncos-less-shoe-shining-more-leadership-lessons/>

Participants will be graded on a paper assignment, and will have to give a briefing. They will also have to lead their fellow classmates in a small-group exercise, where they attempt to solve a complex issue in a limited amount of time.

“One of the hardest things to do as a leader is to lead your peers,” Bailey said. “We are going to expect this select group of individuals to be able to do that as well. ... That is the PhD level of leadership.”

It’s important that when it comes to those skills, airmen in the 14-day class get the same level of instruction as those in the 40-day iteration, Bailey said.

AETC will use surveys to see whether participants were motivated by being able to skip over redundant, unnecessary parts of the typical 40-day training curriculum, he said. If those surveys and other studies show the program was successful, it could be expanded further — perhaps even to award officer candidates competency credit for their pre-existing education, training and experience.

Ultimately, Spangenthal said, the changes are intended to further motivate SNCOs, by acknowledging everything they’ve already accomplished, and to get them working on becoming officers more quickly.

“There is a frustration with waiting to attend training, especially when that training is really taking a change into your trajectory from going from senior NCO to officer,” Spangenthal said. “I’d hate for folks to be completely demotivated, over time, when we could continue to move them out.”

[Stephen Losey](#) covers leadership and personnel issues as the senior reporter for Air Force Times. He comes from an Air Force family, and his investigative reports have won awards from the Society of Professional Journalists. He has traveled to the Middle East to cover Air Force operations against the Islamic State.

Miscellaneous

Birth Control Policies at Boot Camp Affect Military Readiness, Study Finds

By Patricia Kime

Military.com, May 14, 2019

[Army](#) soldiers have more babies in their first two years of enlistment and miss more work as a result than do women in the other military branches, a finding researchers say is linked to different service policies on birth control education and access at basic training.

Between 2013 and 2016, the birth rate among soldiers in the first two years of military service ranged between 10.1% and 11.4%, while the combined rate for women in the other branches hovered at around 6.4%.

The higher rate among soldiers resulted in an additional .04 deliveries, 3.7 more days of postpartum leave and 28.2 more pregnancy-related non-deployable days per service woman trained than for sailors, airmen and [Marines](#), said Dr. Tim Roberts, a retired [Navy](#) commander who now works at Children's Mercy Kansas City.

Babies themselves may be a joy, but when they aren't planned, they can upend a service member's life and affect readiness, Roberts said. Citing studies of service members who left deployments early in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm due to unintended pregnancies, Roberts called it "a problem that has a definite impact on the combat readiness of the troops."

At Army boot camp, female recruits receive education on all types of birth control and have access to contraception at sick call. They also can receive the most effective types of birth control, known as long-acting reversible contraception such as intrauterine devices or implants, on referral.

In contrast, the Navy aggressively promotes long-acting reversible contraception, or LARC, and other effective forms of birth control at basic training. It requires recruits to meet individually with medical providers and provides access to contraception at sick call or in walk-in contraception-only clinics that provide same-day access to LARC.

According to Roberts, the Navy's approach, known as "LARC Forward" and implemented in 2015, has reduced the service's childbirth rates and related missed days by .012 deliveries, .9 days of postpartum leave and nearly 8 days of childbirth-related non-deployable days per service woman trained.

"The Navy has had some good leadership within the medical corps, and they really leaned forward into the problem of addressing women's health," Roberts said. "If someone in the military wants to get pregnant, by all means, have a kid. But if you don't want one, [Navy leadership said], 'Let us help you.' They became very proactive."

Roberts and several civilian and military colleagues, including Dr. William Adelman at Children's Mercy, [Air Force](#) adolescent medicine specialist Dr. Joshua Smalley and Air Force Maj. Larissa Weir, conducted the study to determine how different policies affected pregnancy, childbirth and work attendance, all of which affect military readiness.

They culled military insurance records to identify all female active-duty recruits between October 2013 and October 2017 and determine whether those recruits used birth control at six months of service and if they entered the hospital to have a baby within their first two years.

The data showed that in 2017, at six months, the Navy had the highest proportion of members who used highly effective methods of birth control, at 40%. The Air Force and Marines were at 26% and 23%, respectively, and the Army, 17%.

<https://www.military.com/daily-news/2019/05/14/birth-control-policies-boot-camp-affect-military-readiness-study-finds.html>

The percent of junior enlisted women who had a baby in 2017 was 5.1% for the Air Force, 6.1% in the Navy, 9.7% in the [Marine Corps](#) and 10.1% in the Army.

Notably, the childbirth rate for the Marine Corps was at 8% in 2015. It rose after the service decreased classroom time for non-military lessons in 2016. Instead of mandatory education on contraception at boot camp, female Marine recruits now have access to optional contraception education once a week, outside of working hours.

They can get contraception at sick call and have access to LARC in the last two weeks of basic training.

Roberts said the Marine Corps is a prime example of why education on contraception should be conducted at boot camp.

"They're saving time in basic training, but they are losing the time when they are non-deployable or on postpartum leave," he said.

According to the research, the Air Force stands out as having the lowest childbirth rates, even though the Navy has the highest use of contraception. At Air Force basic training, recruits receive group education at a clinic that emphasizes the most effective methods of birth control. They can receive contraception at sick call and one morning during the week at a specialty clinic. Since 2017, they also have had access to LARC in the last five weeks of basic training.

"The women in the Air Force have the lowest delivery rates than the women in the other services, and I'm not sure why," Roberts said. "There may be something different the Air Force is doing about contraceptive use when they get out of basic training. There may be something different about the women who join the Air Force versus the Army, Navy, Marines. If there's something they are doing, we would like to know."

Roberts described unintended pregnancies in the military as a "common problem." With the Defense Department providing no-cost contraception and reproductive health care services to all its members, he added, women should be able to have children only when they want them.

"It's surprising to me that we have such wide variability in policies. We all have the same goal -- creating service members. But there's a variability as to what they allow people to do at basic training," Roberts said.

While he is not sure implementing the Navy's LARC Forward program at all basic training centers would result in similar outcomes, he believes it would help.

He'd like to see LARC Forward implemented at one of the Army's three basic training facilities to see what effect, if any, it has on outcomes. He has begun speaking with U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command about conducting research into the issue, which would be funded by the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences.

"If you make it easy for recruits to start contraception and communicate with them to use the most effective methods, they don't get pregnant," Roberts said. "You can't just throw this to the next duty station, say 'Start this later,' because they don't."

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Immigrant soldiers now denied US citizenship at higher rate than civilians

By Tara Copp

McClatchy Washington Bureau, May 15, 2019



[Watch](#) Macon veteran become U.S. citizen

Air Force veteran Ralph Lord became a U.S. citizen on Oct. 12, 2018, at a naturalization ceremony in Atlanta. Lord resides at a homeless veterans transition home in Macon, Ga. By Jason Cormier

WASHINGTON

Immigrants serving in the U.S. military are being denied citizenship at a higher rate than foreign-born civilians, according to new government data that has revealed the impact of stricter Trump administration immigration policies on service members.

According to the same data, the actual number of service members even applying for U.S. citizenship has also plummeted since President Donald Trump took office, the [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services](#) reported in its quarterly naturalization statistics.

“The U.S. has had a long-standing tradition of immigrants come to the U.S. and have military service provide a path to citizenship,” said retired U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Paul Eaton, a senior adviser to the liberal veterans advocacy group VoteVets.org. “To have this turnaround, where they are actually taking a back seat to the civilian population strikes me as a bizarre turn of events.”

According to [the most recent USCIS data available](#), the agency denied 16.6 percent of military applications for citizenship, compared to an 11.2 percent civilian denial rate in the first quarter of fiscal year 2019, a period that covers October to December 2018.

NATURALIZATION: MILITARY DENIAL RATES VS. CIVILIAN DENIAL RATES

It's now harder for foreign-born members of the U.S. military to become U.S. citizens than it is for foreign-born civilians who seek citizenship, but choose not to serve, according to the latest government data.

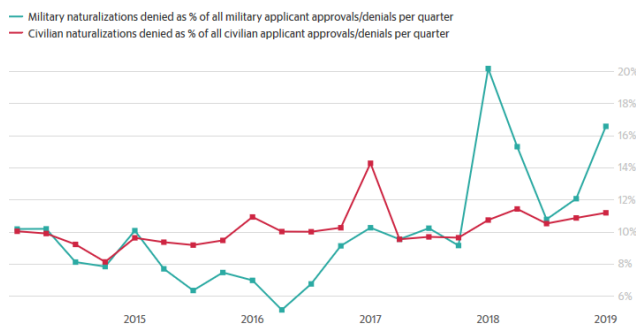


Chart: Tara Copp • Source: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services • Get the data

The fiscal year 2019 data is the eighth quarterly report of military naturalization rates since Trump took office. In six of the last eight reports, civilians had a higher rate of approval for citizenship than military applicants did, reversing the previous trend.

Attorneys for service members seeking to become citizens said [new military immigration policies](#) announced by the administration in 2017 and Trump’s overall anti-immigrant rhetoric are to blame.

“I think people are disheartened right now by the immigration climate,” said Elizabeth Ricci, an attorney who is representing immigrant service members. “We talk about a wall all the time. This is an invisible wall.”

Is service no longer a path to citizenship?

Overall, the number of service members who apply to become naturalized citizens is just a fraction of the civilian applications, but both pools have shrunk over the last two years. In the first quarter of the Trump administration, January to March 2017 — which is the second quarter of fiscal year 2017 — there were 3,069 foreign-born members of the military who applied to become naturalized citizens. That same quarter, 286,892 foreign-born civilians applied.

<https://www.mcclatchydc.com/latest-news/article230269884.html>

In the first quarter of fiscal year 2019, USCIS reported it received only 648 military applications for citizenship, a 79 percent drop. For comparison, the agency received 189,410 civilian applications, a 34 percent drop.

The Defense Department was repeatedly asked for comment by McClatchy, but did not provide a response.

USCIS officials said the drop in applications is not due to any action by their agency, which processes the applications as it receives them.

“The fall in military naturalization applications is likely attributable in significant part to the Department of Defense’s decision not to renew the Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest [MAVNI] program after its expiration at the end of FY17,” USCIS said in a statement.

The agency also said it continues to highly value military service.

“USCIS has long recognized the important sacrifices made by our nation’s service members,” said USCIS spokeswoman Jessica Collins. “USCIS will continue to support noncitizens who are serving, or who have served, in the U.S. armed forces and are eligible to apply for naturalization under special provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act.”

DOD immigration roadblocks

Immigrants who wish to join the U.S. military fall into three categories: legal permanent U.S. residents, commonly known as “Green Card” holders; foreign-born recruits with key medical or language skills who came to the United States under student, work or asylum visas and enlisted through MAVNI; and special status non-immigrant enlistees, who are residents of the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Palau.

The Trump administration in 2017 [announced major changes](#) to the way the Pentagon would vet and clear foreign-born recruits and [other overall changes](#) to when a service member would qualify for naturalization.

The impact was felt across all three categories of recruits, said retired Army Reserve Lt. Col. Margaret Stock, an attorney who specializes in representing immigrant soldiers in her private practice.

Immigrant enlistees previously could join basic training once a background investigation had been initiated, and they could become eligible to start seeking citizenship after one day of military service. Under the new policy, enlistees do not go to basic training until their background investigation is complete, and they have to complete basic training and 180 days of service before they can seek citizenship.

In the months that followed, the Defense Department [shut down naturalization offices](#) at some of its basic training locations, citing the new policy.

Other changes appeared procedural but had deep impact, such as the change that only higher-ranking officers, at colonel or above, were authorized to sign key USCIS forms verifying that an enlistee had served honorably. The signatures had to be original, too, which made it much more difficult for troops in outlier areas where the nearest colonel or higher-ranking officer may be hundreds of miles away, Stock said.

The new rules had a chilling effect, military immigration attorneys said. Unit leaders who previously would have shepherded naturalization paperwork through for their service members have stopped doing so, the attorneys said.

“People are telling them ‘wait until you get to your first unit.’ When they get to the unit they are told, ‘we don’t know anything about this anymore,’” Stock said.

The lack of guidance in units for immigrant soldiers “is all intentional,” Ricci said. “It’s part of this overall culture of ‘No.’ ”

The new rules have left some recruits waiting for years to serve.

A three-year wait for one recruit

Army recruit Ajay Kumar Jaina, 33, came to the United States from India in 2012 on an H-1B visa to work for Veritas Healthcare Solutions. He has a master's degree in pharmaceutical analysis and wanted to become a military pharmacist. In May 2016 he enlisted under MAVNI for his medical skills.



Army recruit Ajay Kumar Jaina, 33, has been waiting almost three years for the military to process his background checks so he can report to basic training. Jaina came to the U.S. from India under an H-1B work visa as a pharmaceuticals analyst. He said he wanted to join the U.S. military to give back and become a U.S. citizen. (Contributed photo)

He's been in a holding pattern ever since. In the almost three years he's waited to go to basic training, he's reported for duty for more than 20 weekends with the 445th Quartermaster Company in Trenton, New Jersey.

He goes to New Jersey knowing that he will be unable to drill with the rest of the unit because he has not yet undergone basic training since the Defense Department has not completed his background check.

So his activities on base are limited to administration and inventory roles.

"When I registered in the Army, at that time I was told my basic training location. I was told within six months my background check would be verified, and then I could go to basic and then (advanced individual training) then I could be come apply for citizenship," Jaina said.

Jaina said no determination has been made on his background check yet. "Which is actually good!" he said. "I can wait. I can keep my hopes high."

Jaina's H-1B visa expires next month and he said he may have to go back to India in order to be able to return to the United States under a new visa as he continues to wait.

Military recruiting challenges

Eaton questioned why the Defense Department would make it more difficult to pull from eligible immigrant recruits, particularly in light of the recruiting challenges the military faces overall.

"Only 25 percent of the U.S. population is eligible to serve, due to academic, health or behavioral issues," Eaton said.

Last year the Army missed its annual recruiting goal by more than 6,500 personnel. In a statement, the Army would not say whether the immigration policies had impacted its ability to recruit last year.

"Our leaders remain confident that we have laid the foundation to improve recruiting for the Army while maintaining an emphasis on quality over quantity," the Army said.

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Military recruitment, retention challenges remain, service chiefs say

By Claudia Grisales

Stars and Stripes, May 16, 2019



Chief of Naval Personnel Vice Adm. Robert P. Burke answers a question during a House Armed Service Subcommittee on Military Personnel hearing on Capitol Hill, May 16, 2019. Next to him is Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services Lt. Gen. Brian T. Kelly.

JOE GROMELSKI/STARS AND STRIPES

WASHINGTON — Despite retention and some recruitment gains, plenty of challenges remain for the military branches to adapt to an evolving economy and growing worker needs, the service chiefs said Thursday. They told a House Armed Services Committee subpanel examining the issue that they've installed a series of programs to entice new enlistments and retain servicemembers.

But despite those initiatives, and some positive trends in recruitment, there's much work ahead to meet the needs of a modern military.

"We have challenges that remain and we still have a great deal of work to get to where we need to be if we are going to be truly competitive," Vice Adm. Robert Burke, chief of naval personnel, testified before the subpanel on military personnel issues. "But we're on a good path."

The service chiefs told the House panel that efforts to improve child care options, streamlined processes for military spouses to obtain professional licenses after moves, boosted career flexibility and increased perks have helped with retention.

James Stewart, acting undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, told House lawmakers that the military services are exhibiting strong retention rates and are expected to meet goals this year to keep servicemembers from leaving.

Much of that is happening by recognizing an old adage that the military recruits the member but retains the family, Stewart said. That entails offering perks such as increasing basic allowance for housing and offering new technology portals to find child care.

Fierce competition

Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif., chairwoman of the panel who recently visited several installations, said servicemembers have four key areas of concern: assignment location, child care, spouse professional employment and help resources for sexual misconduct and domestic violence.

Mississippi Rep. Trent Kelly, the ranking Republican on the subpanel, said he's especially concerned about severe waits for child care that go beyond six months. Service chiefs told lawmakers that many of the child care delays arise in Hawaii and Alaska, as well as large installations such as Langley Air Force Base and Quantico in Virginia and Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton in California.

Kelly said he's also concerned the Defense Department isn't using available data to its full potential to meet retention demands.

"We need to clearly understand why servicemembers are electing to get out of the military and to understand what would have kept them in the service," he said. "The Defense Department already has much of the data necessary to answer these questions, but I remain concerned that the department is not maximizing their use of this information in order to make informed policy decisions."



James N. Stewart, left, who is performing the Duties of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, listens during a House Armed Service Subcommittee on Military Personnel hearing on Capitol Hill, May 16, 2019. Next to him is Army Deputy Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Thomas Seamands.

JOE GROMELSKI/STARS AND STRIPES

With the demographics of servicemembers changing, the branches must adapt with the times, Speier said.

“A small number of Americans serve in our armed forces and they have growing expectations,” she said. “The competition for the limited talent is fierce.”

Lt. Gen. Thomas Seamands, Army deputy chief of staff, said to help grow its ranks, the service is reimbursing spouses for professional license and credentialing costs, improving the officer promotion system and modernizing its personnel model.

“The Army is moving from an industrial age, personnel distribution system to an information age, market-based model,” he said.

The Army is coming off a difficult recruiting year, when it missed its 2018 goals. However, there are some reports that recruiting this year is trending upwards in major cities, such as New York, Minneapolis and Baltimore.

Lt. Gen. Brian Kelly, Air Force deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel and services, said his service is on track also to meet its fiscal year 2019 recruiting goals. However, it continues to see pilot shortages of roughly 2,000.

Kelly said initiatives such as a program that lets families defer a move when they have a child in their last year of high school and professional license reimbursements could be key to seeing continued improvements. The Air Force is slated to reach an end strength of 690,500 for 2019.

The Navy, meanwhile, is focusing on its “Sailor 2025” initiative, relying on using new technology, smart phones and social media to spread the word on opportunities, Burke said. It’s slated to grow by 7,500 members this year and another 5,100 next year.

Burke said the service is also focusing on how to retain its large share of married members. In its officer ranks, 67% are married, while that figure is more than 50% for enlisted sailors, he said.

“We have to address that reality if we are to retain the family,” Burke said.

Retaining women

Rep. Elaine Luria, D-Va., said the Navy has only promoted a small percentage of female aviators, with less than 4% moved into command positions, according to recent figures.

Only one of those promotions was for a woman of color, she noted.

“We have to improve in this area,” Burke said.

Meanwhile, Seamands said more than 1,000 Army women have been recently transferred to previously closed-off jobs in infantry, armor and field artillery units.

Lt. Gen. Michael Rocco, Marine Corps deputy commandant for manpower and reserve affairs, said its ranks of women has grown from 7.3% five years ago to 8.8% today.

At the 2019 Sea-Air-Space Exposition earlier this month, Sgt. Maj. Robin Fortner, sergeant major of Marine Corps Systems Command, said a weakness remains when it comes to addressing the work-life balance.

<https://www.stripes.com/military-recruitment-retention-challenges-remain-service-chiefs-say-1.581364>

“Some things as far as when we look at the levels as the senior members, life and career, with the balance of that, we’re losing a lot of our female Marines when it comes to retention in that aspect,” she said.

And the ranks of women at senior levels drops dramatically, Fortner said.

“Just from my own experience, it’s tough to do this for a long time... because this is physically demanding at the same time,” she said. “It’s not because they’re not capable, it just becomes very, very demanding on your life.”

Stars and Stripes Reporter Caitlin M. Kenney contributed to this report

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Misconduct

Lt. Col. in charge of Corps' 1st Recon was fired over 'credible' allegations of domestic violence

By Paul Szoldra

Task & Purpose, May 13, 2019



Lt. Francisco Zavala (Photo: US Marine Corps)

The relief of the battalion commander in charge of the California-based 1st Reconnaissance Battalion last week was due to "credible" allegations of domestic violence, Task & Purpose has learned.

Lt. Col. Francisco Zavala, 42, who was [removed from his post on Tuesday](#) by the commanding general of 1st Marine Division, was served with a request for a restraining order in April alleging that his "unstable, violent, and harassing behavior" had made his wife "fear greatly for her safety," she wrote in a sworn two-page statement obtained by Task & Purpose.

Task & Purpose has chosen not to disclose her name.

Filed on April 4 as part of an ongoing divorce case, Zavala's wife detailed multiple instances of domestic abuse over the course of their marriage.

In her statement, Zavala's wife said she had sought and received help from the [Family Advocacy Program](#) at Camp Pendleton, which provides counseling and victim advocacy services, and had made a [restricted report](#) about her husband's alleged abuse. She later converted the complaint to an unrestricted report, which would have alerted Zavala's command, even though she said that she feared retaliation from her husband since the allegations would likely affect his career.

How Marine officials reacted to her report remains unclear. Although a source familiar with the matter said the unit conducted an investigation and had "found credible evidence" of domestic abuse which culminated in Zavala's ouster, a press release from the Division [cited](#) only a "loss of trust and confidence" in his ability to lead as the reason for his removal.

When asked for a copy of the investigation by Task & Purpose, 1st Lt. Cameron Edinburgh, a spokesman for 1st Marine Division, said it was not yet ready for public release. Edinburgh declined to comment on when the command first learned of the reported allegations against Zavala.

"An investigation is currently underway. This is an internal Marine Corps personnel matter and we will not release any further information at this time," Edinburgh told Task & Purpose. "All Marines are afforded due process as outlined in the Uniform Code of Military Justice. At this time, Lt. Col. Zavala has not been charged with any crime."

Zavala's removal from command is the [fourth](#) high-profile firing of a senior Marine officer in recent weeks.

Though it remains unclear whether Zavala will remain in the Corps — being branded with "loss of trust" is considered a career ender by many — his loss of command of one of the Corps' [most famous](#) and respected reconnaissance battalions seems a stunning coda to a 19-year career that saw Zavala rise through the ranks as he deployed multiple times to Iraq and Afghanistan — where he earned [the Bronze Star](#) (with "V" for valor) medal in 2010 for exposing himself to enemy fire while attempting to secure the site of a downed AH-1W Cobra helicopter.

* * *

What began as a long distance relationship in 2013 was increasingly punctuated by turmoil after the couple married in August 2017, according to court documents.

<https://taskandpurpose.com/zavala-domestic-violence-allegations>

On the night of Dec. 23, 2018, days after Zavala had returned from a short deployment to Peru, the couple got into an argument that turned violent, his wife wrote in the statement.

Zavala allegedly struck her in the face, took her phone away when she threatened to call 911, and then "slammed me against the wall," she wrote, "Pinning me there while he screamed in my face, then threw me on the ground and held me down while he continued to yell in my face."

"When he let go of me I ran out of the room and across the street to the neighbor's house, who I barely knew, where I stayed overnight," she continued. Once at the neighbor's home, she wrote that she "hesitated to call the police" since she was "embarrassed, terrified, and in shock."

The next day, after she had returned to pack up her belongings and leave for Colorado to be with her family, she wrote that Zavala "was in a bad mood, blamed me for what happened, and ignored me." While she was packing in the bedroom, the statement said, Zavala pushed over their Christmas tree and tore their Christmas wreath off the door, throwing it in the backyard.

There were other instances of abuse and controlling behavior, according to the statement.



assets.rbl.ms

On Oct. 21, 2018, Zavala allegedly broke both of the couple's cell phones by "slamming them to the ground while in a rage," she wrote, before he "wrapped me in a bear hug and would not let me go when I told him I wanted to leave the house since I was scared."

During another argument in the fall of 2018, Zavala allegedly picked up a gun and pointed it at his head, threatening to shoot himself, she wrote, "because I made his life so miserable." He went on to threaten suicide on two additional occasions, she added.

"This makes me fearful about what he might be capable of doing to me. I wish to keep him away from me and have him not contact me anymore," she wrote.

In addition to describing her fears of physical violence, Zavala's wife also alleged that he had sent harassing text messages "on an almost daily basis" after they had separated on Christmas Day. Zavala texted her that she was "filled with Satan's hatred" and claimed that she was being "influenced by 'the devil,'" she wrote.

"I have asked him seven times to stop contacting me via email, texts, and calls after he continually harassed me by sending me hundreds of messages," she wrote. "My attorney was even forced to send [Zavala] a cease and desist letter to try and stop this harassment, but he continued to contact me after that and has even tried to contact my parents."

Reached by Task & Purpose on Friday, Zavala repeatedly said that there was an ongoing investigation and that all "the allegations against me are false," adding that, "my responsibility is to allow the investigation to go on and, in time, I'm fairly confident I'll be exonerated of everything that's being alleged against me."

"We are going through a legal process in a court of law, and that will be adjudicated in the court of law," Zavala told Task & Purpose. "I have my evidence."

Still, despite Zavala's refusal to respond to specific questions from Task & Purpose, he confirmed that he did not file a written response to his wife's allegations with the court. The response to request for domestic violence restraining order, [or DV-210](#), would be considered by a judge before enacting a restraining order, said Nicole Muckley, a family law attorney [in Newport Beach](#).

"That's true," Zavala said, after Task & Purpose mentioned that he had not disputed his wife's sworn statement in court documents. He declined to elaborate.

<https://taskandpurpose.com/zavala-domestic-violence-allegations>

"My defense is ready to go and I will be exonerated," Zavala said. "Please appreciate there is an ongoing investigation. I am innocent of the charges against me. And the due process will demonstrate that in due time."



U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Col. Francisco X. Zavala, center, commanding officer of Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force - Peru, briefs Marines aboard the San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship USS Somerset (LPD 25) in San Diego, Nov. 11, 2018.

Task & Purpose twice asked Zavala on Friday if his attorney could speak on his behalf to dispute the allegations, since an attorney's comments would not have any bearing on a command investigation.

Zavala did not make him available to Task & Purpose.

Meanwhile, the restraining order banned Zavala from further contacting his wife and also required that he get rid of all firearms and ammunition in his possession. He sold his two pistols and provided documentation of those sales to the court on April 12. Two other rifles he owned, Zavala told the court, are currently in the possession of his wife's father in Colorado.

Beyond ownership, Zavala cannot have or possess a firearm while the restraining order is in effect, meaning he would not even be allowed to draw his weapon from his unit's armory for use during an exercise or deployment.

Attempts to reach Zavala's wife were unsuccessful. Her attorney did not respond to multiple requests for comment from Task & Purpose.

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Marine Corps punishes drill instructors and officers after hazing incidents

The incidents occurred in a unit in which female drill instructors train female recruits.

By Dan Lamothe

The Washington Post, May 15, 2019



Marine recruits descend from a rappel tower at Parris Island, S.C., in 2017. (Cpl. Joseph Jacob/ Marine Corps)

The Marine Corps punished at least eight drill instructors and some officers in response to allegations of hazing and other abuses last year at the service's recruit training center at Parris Island, S.C., according to Marine officials and documents obtained by The Washington Post.

Investigators found numerous incidents in which recruits had been abused by the Marines training them, despite efforts by Marine Corps leaders to stamp out the problem following the death of a 20-year-old trainee, Pvt. Raheel Siddiqui, in 2016.

A Marine spokesman, Capt. Bryan McDonnell, said in a statement that the drill instructors "received appropriate administrative actions of varying degrees relative to substantiated allegations," indicating commanders determined criminal charges were not necessary.

Several officers overseeing the drill instructors also received some form of administrative punishment, McDonnell said, without providing specifics.

The cases, which have not previously been disclosed to the public, occurred in the 4th Recruit Training Battalion, a unit in which female drill instructors train female recruits. The investigations were opened as the service began considering more fully integrating male and female recruits during training, as in the other services.

Documents detailing the investigations were released to The Post through the Freedom of Information Act.

Investigators examined numerous allegations against drill instructors in the battalion's Papa Company, including one case in which a recruit's tooth was chipped in July 2018.

In a handwritten statement, the recruit recalled that she tried to tell other recruits to slow down while they were moving in formation, upsetting the senior drill instructor. The recruit could not recall whether the Marine pushed her arm or the weapon itself.

"I knew I was in the wrong for overstepping when I shouldn't have, but I wasn't used to anyone messing with the weapon," the recruit wrote.

The senior drill instructor later found the recruit on a bathroom bench at night writing to a former Reserve Officer Training Corps instructor, a sergeant major, about the incident. The recruit told an investigating officer the instructor confiscated several letters and asked other recruits the next day whether they would say she had abused them.

The drill instructor said she eventually told others in control about the incident, and the recruit was transferred to a different platoon. The drill instructor was informed she could be charged with failure to obey an order or regulation, according to military documents, which do not clarify what commanders chose to do.

In August, another 4th Recruit Battalion drill instructor slammed a recruit's hand with a foot locker, according to the documents. The recruit received medical treatment and later reported she believed the

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2019/05/15/marine-corps-punishes-drill-instructors-officers-after-hazing-incidents/>

incident was an accident. However, other recruits said drill instructors told them to say it was unintentional, according to the investigation. It is not clear whether commanders determined what happened.

One recruit interviewed in the case reported she and three other Marines were forced to go through a chamber that introduces recruits to CS gas twice within minutes during training, instead of once as typically required. The recruit wrote in a witness statement that drill instructors said “enlisted look out for enlisted,” something she construed to be a message to keep quiet.

In a separate investigation, 13 people reported a senior drill instructor in the battalion for acting inappropriately, the documents said. A case was opened after a recruit told an officer in May 2018 that she was ordered to put “feces soiled underwear” on her head, and a second recruit backed up the allegation, documents said.

In a statement to an investigating officer, the senior drill instructor involved said the incident occurred after a recruit left underwear under her bed. She asked the recruit if she understood that doing so was a problem and then suggested she would understand better if she put them on her head, the drill instructor recalled, according to the documents.

“I was speaking hypothetically and failed to handle the situation with a clear mind through frustration,” the drill instructor wrote. “I was not trying to embarrass the recruit and more so wanted her to understand why and how it wasn’t acceptable. The underwear didn’t have feces.”

The documents do not make clear what the investigation found, or whether the drill instructor was disciplined.

Another investigation was launched in February 2018 after several recruits reported anonymously that they had been roughed up, and one said a drill instructor had threatened to break her neck.

The senior officer in charge of Parris Island, Brig. Gen. James Glynn, said in an email to The Post that the investigations help the service determine what is necessary to maintain “effectiveness and discipline” during recruit training. He defended the behavior of the majority of the Marines under his command.

“There’s a more intriguing story in the more than 600 Marines who are drill instructors here, and their families, and their personal and professional investment in transforming young women and men into Marines,” Glynn wrote. “The 100+ hrs a week they dedicate to their role, and the support of their families, is the source of transformative energy that makes this remarkable process possible. The fact that 98% of them do so without any allegation is the storyline I commend to you.”

The Post has obtained documents [outlining more than 20 other substantiated hazing and abuse cases](#) at Parris Island and the service’s West Coast recruit training center in San Diego that span the past seven years.

In the most serious, former [Gunnery Sgt. Joseph Felix was convicted of maltreatment](#) and sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment for subjecting Muslim recruits, including Siddiqui, to verbal and physical abuse. Siddiqui fell to his death over a railing after running away from Felix, who had slapped him in the face. Authorities determined the case to be a suicide, but Siddiqui’s family has disputed that finding.

[Dan Lamothe](#) Dan Lamothe joined The Washington Post in 2014 to cover the U.S. military and the Pentagon. He has written about the Armed Forces for more than a decade, traveling extensively, embedding with each service and covering combat in Afghanistan numerous times. [Follow](#)

The Navy's probe into sky penis

By Geoff Ziezulewicz

Navy Times, May 14, 2019



Social media reaction to the Navy's sky penis.

In 2017, a Navy flight crew roared into legend when they drew a giant phallus in the sky with the contrails of their jet, assuming it would quickly blow away. It did not. Now, Navy Times has obtained the transcript of the conversation that led to the 'sky dong.'

It prompted viral guffaws from some and online outrage from others.

There are [shot glasses](#) commemorating the event and it birthed [memes](#) ahead of the annual Army-Navy game.

But the inside story of how an [EA-18G Growler](#) jet crew drew a penis across the clear blue skies of Washington state in 2017 has never been told.

Until now.

It was the work of two junior officers with the “Zappers” of [Electronic Attack Squadron 130](#), who had sky time to kill and noticed that the white contrails their jet produced were particularly robust that afternoon.

But they never counted on those contrails lingering long enough for folks on the ground to see their phallic rendering, according to a copy of the military's sky penis investigation obtained exclusively by Navy Times.

- [Penis skydrawing was our doing, Navy says](#)

[KREM 2](#), a local TV station, broke the news after a woman snapped pics of the sky drawings on Nov. 16, 2017, near a training area for the squadron, which is based in western Washington at [Naval Air Station Whidbey Island](#).

“A mother who lives in Okanogan who took pictures of the drawings reached out to KREM 2 to complain about the images, saying she was upset she might have to explain to her young children what the drawings were,” [the station reported](#).

The story of the sky penis took wing from there, spreading umbrage and juvenile glee to all corners of the internet.

It also prompted nervous commanders to file urgent communiques to Navy leadership back in Washington, D.C., letting them know that this was about to turn into a thing.

Within hours of the phallic rendering, the squadron sent an alert to higher ups in an “official information dispatch” that reached the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations.

“Aircrew maneuvered an EA-18G aircraft in a pattern that resulted in contrails depicting an obscene symbol when viewed from the ground,” it warned. “Media attention is expected.”

Flying as “Zapper 21,” the lieutenants responsible for the drawing took off from Whidbey with another jet at about noon that day, according to the investigation.

The squadron's commanding officer would later praise the pilot as a shy introvert and “a ‘whiz kid’ who managed our training and readiness with higher efficiency and effectiveness than anyone else I have seen in a squadron,” according to the investigation.

<https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2019/05/14/the-navys-probe-into-sky-penis/>

His cockpit partner that day, an electronic warfare officer, or EWO, was “my best junior officer,” the CO noted.

What discipline the Zapper 21 duo faced remains unknown.

Citing privacy regulations, officials declined to provide such records, and all names are redacted in the report copy provided to Navy Times in response to a Freedom of Information Act request.

- [An Air Force sky penis to rival the Navy's own?](#)

The day's flight was to be a standard 90 minutes of training over the skies of north-central Washington.

Their partner jet soon flew to another section of their training area, and the lieutenants got an idea.

The EWO broached it first, according to the investigation.

“My initial reaction was no, bad,” the pilot wrote in a statement after the incident. “But for some reason still unknown to me, I eventually decided to do it.”

Their sky penis plan of attack was captured on their cockpit video recording system, a transcript of which is included in the investigation.

“Draw a giant penis,” the EWO said. “That would be awesome.”

“What did you do on your flight?” the pilot joked. “Oh, we turned dinosaurs into sky penises.”

“You should totally try to draw a penis,” the EWO advised.

“I could definitely draw one, that would be easy,” the pilot boasted. “I could basically draw a figure eight and turn around and come back. I'm gonna go down, grab some speed and hopefully get out of the contrail layer so they're not connected to each other.”

They theorized on the second-order effects of their nascent sky drawing.

“Dude, that would be so funny,” the pilot said. “Airliner's coming back on their way into Seattle, just this big (expletive)ing, giant penis. We could almost draw a vein in the middle of it too.”

Soon, the EWO reported they were definitely “marking.”

They had found the sweet altitude, and the contrail sky penis was being born in their wake.

“Balls are going to be a little lopsided,” the pilot advised.

“Balls are complete,” he reported moments later. “I just gotta navigate a little bit over here for the shaft.”

“Which way is the shaft going?” the EWO asked.

“The shaft will go to the left,” the pilot answered.

“It's gonna be a wide shaft,” the EWO noted.

“I don't wanna make it just like 3 balls,” the pilot said.

“Let's do it,” the EWO said. “Oh, the head of that penis is going to be thick.”

“Some like Chinese weather satellite right now that's like, ‘what the (expletive)?’” the pilot surmised.

The jet streaked across the sky, and the duo's magnum opus continued to take shape, showcasing the pilot's prowess in the process.

“To get out of this, I'm gonna go like down and to the right,” the pilot said. “And we'll come back up over the top and try to take a look at it.”

“I have a feeling the balls will have dissipated by then,” his partner answered.

“It's possible,” the pilot said.

<https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2019/05/14/the-navys-probe-into-sky-penis/>

They flew away to a distance where they could take in their work.

They cracked up in the cockpit as their sky penis came into full view, snapping pics they would later delete once they realized their command would likely go apoplectic.

“Oh yes, that was (expletive)ing amazing,” the pilot said. “This is so obvious.”

“That’s a (expletive),” the EWO said. “Dude, I’m amazed that this stayed.”

“Mishap pilot alpha said, ‘Dude, I’m gonna draw a (expletive),’” the EWO said. “EWO alpha said, ‘Yup, that’s a great idea.’”

They waited to see if their partner jet would notice their work.

“Your artwork is amazing,” the lieutenant commander EWO in the other jet radioed to them.

“Glad you guys noticed,” the pilot replied.

- [Air Force: Sky penis drawings over Germany were not intentional](#)

Their triumph was fleeting.

“Soon after, I realized the extent of our actions,” the pilot wrote. “That the contrails were remaining longer than predicted.”

Evasive maneuvers became necessary.

“I remarked that we needed to take steps to try to obfuscate it,” he wrote. “I flew one pass over it essentially trying to scribble it out with my contrails. That pass was ineffective.”

With fuel running low, the jet returned to Whidbey Island.

Back on the ground, the deputy commodore of Electronic Attack Wing Pacific soon contacted the squadron, looking for the executive officer, or XO.

The XO confirmed that there had been squadron jets in the area of the sky penis that afternoon, according to the investigation.

“(The deputy commodore) emailed pictures of the phallic-shaped object that were taken from the ground” to the XO.

When the XO asked the lieutenants if anything unusual had happened during their flight that day, the two immediately fessed up and apologized, according to the report.

“(One lieutenant) stated that he deleted the sky drawing photographs from his phone out of shame and as an attempt at damage control to prevent further accidental spread of the photographs,” the investigator wrote.

“They both apologized and were at once remorseful,” the XO wrote in a summary.

Soon, the squadron’s commanding officer arrived.

The XO showed his boss the sky penis pics and explained what happened.

“He was immediately furious,” the XO wrote. “He asked both (lieutenants) if they had any idea what the ramifications of their actions were going to be.”

- [Look to the sky — the triumphant return of the sky penis is upon us](#)

Neither lieutenants had any previous disciplinary problems, and the high jinks were conducted after the training was completed, according to the report.

While Navy officials said at the time of the incident that the two would go before a disciplinary board, the investigating officer recommended they receive “non-punitive letters of instruction.”

<https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2019/05/14/the-navys-probe-into-sky-penis/>

“While the sky writing conducted by (the lieutenants) was crude, immature, and unprofessional, it was not premeditated or planned and not in keeping with their character demonstrated prior to the incident,” the investigator wrote.

“Even so, it has caused the United States Navy severe embarrassment in the public arena and jeopardizes the strategic narrative that underpins the justification of the flight hour program.”

Growler training flights and their noise are a recurring complaint among some residents in areas of Washington state.

“Additionally, the absence of relevant, effective, professional training highlighted by the sophomoric sky drawing indicates a potential waste and misuse of government resources,” the investigator wrote.

The XO defended the wayward lieutenants, calling them both “fine officers and capable aviators.”

“They 100 percent need to be held accountable, but if they are allowed to continue in naval aviation this is not a mistake they will repeat,” he wrote. “Minus the current circumstances, they have never given me a reason to doubt their trustworthiness or their resolve to be officers in the Navy.”

The investigator interviewed squadron members of all ranks to see if the sky penis reflected larger problems at the command.

Personnel across the board reported no concerns, according to the report.

A 2017 command climate survey had placed the squadron above or within Navy averages for nearly all measurable areas, the investigator wrote.

“The investigation revealed no indications of poor command climate and no evidence or allegations (of) overt sexism or misogyny,” the report states.

When it came to the sky penis, one squadron officer statement in the investigation appears to sum up the sentiment of the command regarding the historic act:

“This was a really bad decision by some really good guys in a really good squadron.”

[Geoff Ziezulewicz](#) is a senior staff reporter for Military Times, focusing on the Navy. He covered Iraq and Afghanistan extensively and was most recently a reporter at the Chicago Tribune. He welcomes any and all kinds of tips at geoffz@militarytimes.com.

SEE ALSO:

[The transcript of the pilots talking through their creation of 'sky dong' is even better than their drawing](#)
[Task & Purpose, May 14, 2019]

Two more Navy officers censured for Fat Leonard-related infractions

By Geoff Ziezulewicz

Navy Times, May 16, 2019



Capt. Heedong Choi, shown here in 2009 while commanding the destroyer Chafee, was censured by Navy Secretary Richard Spencer last month for his role in the Fat Leonard scandal. (Navy)

The Navy has censured a pair of commissioned officers for their roles in the [Fat Leonard](#) public corruption scandal.

The letters of censure issued to the captains by [Navy Secretary Richard Spencer](#) serve as both a public rebuke of their actions and shine more light into the web of kickbacks, payoffs and port contracts spun by the portly Leonard Glenn Francis that cost U.S. taxpayers at least \$35 million.

At least 10 captains and admirals have received similar written reprimands in recent years.

Capt. Heedong Choi's infractions took place from 2008 to 2013, as he served in several leadership positions in the Western Pacific, including as commanding officer of the guided-missile destroyer [Chafee](#), according to the April 26 letter.

But Spencer concluded that his relationship with Francis went back to 2001, when Choi was a flag aide to the commander of 7th Fleet.

"As Flag Aide, Mr. Francis specifically described you as his means to 'grease' your Commander and the 'pipeline' between him and your Commander," Spencer wrote. "He also said you were on his 'payroll' since that time because you 'kept delivering.'"

- [Navy captain who moonlighted as Fat Leonard's PR man is going to prison](#)

In exchange for greasing that wheel, Choi enjoyed several lucrative perks.

"On June 6, 2009, you improperly solicited from Mr. Francis arrangements for your marriage proposal and ultimately accepted the gift of an elaborate and lavish private dinner with a jazz ensemble, on the helipad of the Swissotel in Singapore," the letter states. "Mr. Francis/GDMA spent approximately \$18,000 for this event."

Francis instructed Choi "to pass the 'gospel word' of GDMA to other officers, and your actions show you did just that," the letter states.

From 2008 to 2013, Choi took more than \$25,000 in gifts from Francis, and in return the officer improperly endorsed GDMA, facilitated "inappropriate relationships" between Francis and other Navy officers, provided advice on Fat Leonard's operations and shared internal Navy information with the businessman, according to the letter.

Choi tried to impede an investigation into Francis in 2012 as well, Spencer indicated.

"You notified Mr. Francis of an ongoing investigation by the Naval Criminal Investigative Service and Korean authorities and provided Mr. Francis information to avoid or minimize criminal and civil liability," he wrote.

Choi did not respond to requests for comment.

He remains on active duty and is currently stationed with the Navy Reserve Officers' Training Corps at State University of New York Maritime College, according to his service record.

<https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2019/05/16/two-more-navy-officers-censured-for-fat-leonard-related-infractions/>

Choi was [fired](#) as commander of the unit in May 2018.

While officials did not specify why Choi was fired, Navy spokeswoman Capt. Amy Derrick said at the time that it “was based on alleged personal misconduct that is the subject of an ongoing investigation.”

- [Navy hired retired officer despite ‘Fat Leonard’ misconduct investigation](#)

Choi was administratively reassigned to the NROTC unit at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in New York after his relief, Derrick said.

Retired Capt. Ricardo Martinez was also censured in an April 26 letter.

His Fat Leonard-related infractions took place while he was serving as the U.S. Naval attaché to Indonesia and New Zealand from 2001 to 2008, according to the reprimand.

Martinez received or solicited nearly \$16,000 in gifts from Francis and his port services company, Glenn Defense Marine Asia, or GDMA, and the April 26 censure letter contains a “chronological list of misconduct.”

Martinez asked Francis to have Navy business cards made for him in February 2002.

The following month, Martinez provided Francis with “a disc containing force protection photos” of the 7th Fleet flagship Blue Ridge when it was in Indonesia.

He shared “nonpublic” information about the 7th Fleet commander’s visit to the area with Francis in April 2003 and was treated to a free dinner and discounted hotel the following month in Malaysia, according to the letter.

Martinez connected Francis with Saudi navy officials in August 2003 and he disclosed sensitive information regarding President George W. Bush’s visit to Indonesia the following month.

- [‘Fat Leonard’ wrongdoing not a definite career killer for Navy officers](#)

He got hooked up with free or discounted lodging over the next several months, and then reviewed, edited and drafted documents hyping GDMA’s experience and technical capabilities, the letter states.

The letter details 13 instances where Martinez “drafted, reviewed, or edited documents or emails that Mr. Francis/GDMA intended to send to Department of Navy personnel.”

The relationship continued after Martinez started his twilight tour in New Zealand in 2004.

In spring of that year, at Francis’ request, Martinez drafted an email for Francis to send to a Navy judge advocate which requested a change to an ethics opinion regarding whether sailors could attend a GDMA party, according to the letter.

Martinez asked for and received an array of gifts from Francis, including an iPod and a Game Boy video game system, investigators determined.

A few months earlier, he wrote a letter for Francis to send to Navy officials regarding force protection measures and told the magnate to whom he should send his pitch, according to the reprimand.

By 2006, Martinez pinged Francis several times about GDMA giving him a job.

“Between May and July 2006, you contacted Mr. Francis on four separate occasions to discuss employment with GDMA, offering to take leave to travel to Singapore to discuss it with him in person,” the letter states.

“You also sent Mr. Francis a hand-written note and a traditional wooden Maori waka huia box in connection with your employment request.”

- [‘Fat Leonard’ admiral keeps high-level security clearance](#)

<https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2019/05/16/two-more-navy-officers-censured-for-fat-leonard-related-infractions/>

In early 2006, Francis asked Martinez for information about a rival defense contractor and stated that he needed help “to eliminate the competing firm.”

“You eagerly responded to Mr. Francis’ request for information and assistance,” the letter states.

At other times, Martinez ordered a Ford Excursion for Francis and had it delivered to him, a purchase the officer made with a discount he got due to his diplomatic status, according to the reprimand.

“You maintained a highly inappropriate relationship with Mr. Francis/GDMA during two tours and abused the power associated with your position as a U.S. Naval Attaché and senior Naval Officer for your own benefit,” the letter states.

“The frequency of the gifts you solicited and received, your direct and personal contact with Mr. Francis regarding the gifts, and your work on behalf of Mr. Francis/GDMA make absolutely clear that you used your public office for private gain.”

Martinez, a submariner and Texas native, retired in 2008.

Messages left for him Tuesday by Navy Times were not returned and emails and other attempts to contact him were unsuccessful.

[Geoff Ziezulewicz](#) is a senior staff reporter for Military Times, focusing on the Navy. He covered Iraq and Afghanistan extensively and was most recently a reporter at the Chicago Tribune. He welcomes any and all kinds of tips at geoffz@militarytimes.com.

SEE ALSO:

[SECNAV Censures 2 Captains as Part of ‘Fat Leonard’ Investigation](#) [U.S. Naval Institute News, 2019-05-14]

Racism

The Army just settled with a civilian who claims a sergeant major called her a ‘house [N-word]’

By Meghann Myers

Army Times, May 10, 2019



An Army civilian settled a lawsuit with the service in which she alleged racist and sexist treatment by superiors.

An African-American civilian hospital employee “reached a significant settlement agreement” with the Army in late April after a [lawsuit](#) filed last year alleging that she was subjected to a [racist](#) and sexist command climate while working in South Korea.

Shawlawn Beckford, who served on active duty for 11 years before returning in 2006 as a civilian, had accused the Army of supporting a [hostile work environment](#) at Brian Allgood Army Community Hospital at Yongsan, where she was an administrator from 2009 to 2015.

“As a civilian employee it is my duty to represent and uphold the Army’s mission, vision, and leadership philosophy — in or out of uniform,” Beckford said in a May 1 statement from the office of her attorney, Kellogg Hansen in Washington, D.C. “But I am more than a position. I am a person with feelings and emotions, and I was mistreated in a system that failed to protect me.”

Reached for comment by Army Times, Beckford requested to keep the dollar amount of the settlement private.

“While we cannot comment further on the details of the case, harassment is contrary to the Army Values which require us to treat all members with dignity and respect,” Army spokesman Lt. Col. Emanuel Ortiz-Cruz told Army Times in a statement, declining to comment on whether the settlement is an admission of wrongdoing on the part of those named in the lawsuit.

The 32-page complaint, filed in April 2018, details Beckford’s allegations of years of demeaning comments and actions from supervisors at the hospital, as well as her attempts to resolve the issue through the Equal Employment Opportunity program.

“... the Army disregarded Ms. Beckford’s repeated overtures,” according to the brief. “As a result, the harassing and discriminatory behavior directed towards Ms. Beckford continued unabated throughout her tenure at BAACH.”

And because she was outspoken about the situation, the lawsuit alleged, her command retaliated against her.

“Among other things, after Ms. Beckford began speaking out about the hostile work environment at BAACH, her superiors punished her with additional and uncompensated work duties, denied her pay raises that were offered to similarly situated employees, and excluded her from important e-mail communications and meetings involving her team.”

During her tenure, Beckford reported directly to a uniformed deputy commander of clinical services, mostly lieutenant colonels — several of whom spoke highly of her — according to the lawsuit. She had no performance or behavioral actions during her time there, nor ever received a negative counseling.

The complaint alleges that her command sergeant major, also African-American, made demeaning comments to Beckford soon after she arrived at the command in 2009.

<https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/05/10/the-army-just-settled-with-a-civilian-who-claims-a-sergeant-major-called-her-a-house-n-word/>

“On a weekly basis during that time period, [the command sergeant major] would visit Ms. Beckford’s office and make belligerent, gendered comments toward her,” according to the lawsuit. “For example, he told her, ‘You’re a single parent. You’re a slut.’ ”

He also made comments about her race, the complaint said, calling her “just a house [N-word],” “dumb [N-word],” “our token Black person” and “ghetto.”

He also made racially charged comments about others in the command, the lawsuit said.

“Specifically, [he] regularly referred to Ms. Beckford’s subordinates as ‘[N-word],’ and made offensive and threatening comments like “What are you [N-word] doing here? You know that master is going to come in here,” the complaint said.

The command did open a 15-6 investigation, according to the lawsuit, but during her interview, the investigator was suspicious of her claims.

“For example, he asked her if she was ‘sure [the command sergeant major] wasn’t using [N-word] in slang, you know, the way you talk?’ ”

The 15-6 investigation found that though he used racial slurs in the office, it wasn’t in a discriminatory manner, because he himself is black. Still, he was relieved of his position and barred from leading a command again, according to the complaint, but stayed working within the office and continued to harass Beckford.

The following year, Beckford lodged a complaint about an officer, saying he referred to women in the command as “bitches” and “clowns.” The two completed mediation, and he was not punished, according to the lawsuit.

During the same period, she alleged, her lieutenant colonel “demanded that Ms. Beckford go grocery shopping for him or make him plates of food — tasks that were not part of her job requirements, but that Ms. Beckford believed he viewed as stereotypically female obligations.”

In a meeting with the command chaplain to discuss the issue, the officer said that “women are only good for purse shopping,” the lawsuit alleged; the chaplain suggested Beckford find a new job.

In 2014, she filed an EEO complaint saying another senior enlisted leader made racist statements about one of her colleagues, who also filed a complaint, according to the lawsuit.

The NCO had told the colleague that “my dogs don’t like Black people and I’ll set them on you,” “Black people get juice and head grease on my headboards,” “Come back, the ghetto called and they want their bling back,” and that he couldn’t be racist because he had “Black music on my iPod” and was raised by “Black women from the projects,” the lawsuit alleged.

Ultimately, Beckford moved on to a job stateside at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington. She is currently a program managing director at William Beaumont Army Medical Center at Fort Bliss, Texas.

“Not only is this settlement a significant accomplishment in Ms. Beckford’s efforts to hold the Army accountable for the abusive treatment that she suffered, but it is also a testament to Ms. Beckford’s deep commitment to the Army as an institution, and to her commitment to ensuring that civilian employees on Army installations worldwide are treated equally regardless of their race or gender,” her attorney, Katie Cooper, said in the statement.

[Meghann Myers](#) is the senior reporter at Army Times. She covers personnel, leadership, fitness and various other lifestyle issues affecting soldiers.

Religion

Dispute over Bible at Manchester VA hospital divides veterans

By Nick Stoico

Concord Monitor (Concord, N.H.), May 10, 2019



John Newman, pastor at Higher Ground Ministries in Barnstead, holds his Bible in front of the cross at his home compound on Lucas Pond in Northwood on Friday, May 10, 2019. GEOFF FORESTER—Monitor staff

Religion played an important role in John Newman’s Irish-Catholic family when he was a young boy growing up in Newfoundland, Canada, but he says it wasn’t until he faced combat in Vietnam that he fully realized his belief in God.

“Your most heavily involved combat veterans, they find a piece of faith in there somewhere, and they cry out to God one way or another, I know I did, when you think you’re going to get killed and the bullets are flying,” he said.

Newman recalled several close brushes with death during his service, including a harrowing rescue mission where he and his men went into enemy territory to find a U.S. aircraft that had wrecked. The pilot died when the plane went down, he said, but Newman and his men made it out alive. He later received a Bronze Star for that mission.

Through the decades that followed the war, Newman’s faith grew. He is the pastor at Higher Ground Ministries in Barnstead, a church he established in 1986.

His identity as a veteran has also remained important in his life, attending reunions with other men from his battalion and playing bagpipes at memorial services at the Veteran Cemetery in Boscawen.

Newman has been receiving medical care at the Manchester VA ever since he returned home. When he learned that a group of veterans was [calling for the removal of a Bible](#) on display at the hospital, he grew frustrated and feared it could set a precedent to remove other religious symbols from veteran memorials.

In Newman’s opinion, the Bible in dispute over at the VA – which was carried by a prisoner of war in World War II – represents more than Christianity.

“That Bible is probably the best thing there because it represents all religions and so many different sects of religion,” he said in an interview at his Northwood home tucked away on Lucas Pond. “I’m very disappointed in these guys.”

The display is called the Missing Man Table and honors missing veterans and prisoners of war. The table is stationed at the main entranceway to the hospital and is sponsored by Northeast POW/MIA Network.

A federal lawsuit was filed against the VA this week in Concord, demanding the Bible be removed immediately and permanently.

The plaintiff is James Chamberlain, an Air Force veteran and New Hampshire resident as well as a devout Christian. The lawsuit, penned by Chamberlain’s attorney, Lawrence Vogelman, argues the inclusion of the Bible is unconstitutional.

The lawsuit says the government cannot “give favoritism to one religious belief at the expense of others.”

“We would all be outraged if the MVAMC only provided care to Christians, or denied care to non-believers, or those who worship their God in other ways,” the suit reads. “The placement of a Christian Bible on this sacred table is just as objectionable.”

<https://www.concordmonitor.com/Northwood-NH-veteran-bible-display-at-manchester-va-25467746>

In January, 14 veterans who also receive care at the Manchester VA submitted complaints about the Bible display to the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, a civil rights advocacy organization for active military members and veterans, according to the suit.

Shortly after the MRFF received the complaints, the organization's president, Michael Weinstein, called the Manchester VA leadership and demanded the Bible be removed, according to the lawsuit. Weinstein received an email later that day from the acting staff assistant to the director of the Manchester VA saying the Bible would be taken off the display.

"I want you to know that can inform your clients that the Manchester VAMC has the utmost respect and admiration for all Veterans, regardless of belief," the email read, according to the suit. "As such, we are going to be removing the Bible from the display to better serve all veterans."

Less than a month later, on Feb. 23, some of the veterans who called for the Bible's removal reported to the MRFF that the Bible had returned to the display and was locked in a plexiglass box.

It was at this point, according to the court papers, that Chamberlain came forward as another complainant and was willing to be the named plaintiff in a lawsuit, despite also receiving care at the VA.

"Despite his strong personal religious beliefs, he believes that the Christian Bible has no place being displayed on the POW/MIA table," the lawsuit reads. "As a Christian, he respects and loves all his military brothers and sisters and does not want to be exclusionary by the placement of the Christian Bible."

The other complainants, who come from a variety of religious backgrounds, wanted to remain anonymous because they feared retaliation, according to the suit.

The press secretary for the Department of Veteran Affairs, Curt Cashour, issued a statement shortly after news broke that the Manchester VA was being sued.

"This lawsuit – backed by a group known for [questionable practices](#) and [unsuccessful lawsuits](#) – is nothing more than an attempt to force VA into censoring a show of respect for America's POW/MIA community. Make no mistake: VA will not be bullied on this issue," Cashour said.

When the Bible was removed, officials at the VA say they received "an outpouring of complaints from Veterans and other stakeholders – many of whom dropped off Bibles at the facility – in protest of this action."

The Bible was returned to the table after the hospital consulted their lawyers. Cashour said the decision to initially remove the Bible was made "out of an abundance of caution."

"We apologize to the veterans, families and other stakeholders who were offended by our incorrect removal of this Bible," he said.

Newman, a Vietnam veteran from Northwood, said he believes the VA made a knee-jerk decision to pull the Bible off the table after hearing the complaints.

"Every time there is one voice against something ... we immediately bend," he said. "This erosion, it starts with this Bible issue, and when one thing starts there's a domino effect. We have a table with a Bible on it at our Veterans Cemetery. Once they start with this, do they want to take everything away?"

(Nick Stoico can be reached at 369-3321, nstoico@concordmonitor.com or on Twitter @NickStoico.)

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Sexual Assault / Harassment

In nude photo case, a commander dropped charges of conspiracy and abuse

By Meghann Myers

Army Times, May 16, 2019



Two soldiers, both women, have been disciplined for bullying after catfishing a male soldier who sent one of them a photo of himself. (Courtesy photo/Getty Images Stock)

Earlier this year, a battalion commander within the [18th Military Police Brigade](#) handed out two Article 15s to a staff sergeant and a private first class accused of faking an identity to get a [nude photo](#) from another soldier, then sharing it with others in the unit.

The results of the non-judicial punishment were published in the unit's monthly newsletter, with a short narrative of the command investigation and a finding of bullying.

"The usage of the word 'conspiracy' in the newsletter served to highlight the fact that the soldiers worked together to obtain photos," Beth Clemons, a U.S. Army Europe spokeswoman, told Army Times on Friday.

However, what the newsletter did not clarify is that the commander, the 709th Military Police Battalion's Lt. Col. John Copeland, did not find the soldiers guilty of conspiracy, and the photo in question apparently did not include what the [Uniform Code of Military Justice](#) refers to as the "private area."

"WTF?!?!? Posted by [U.S Army W.T.F! moments](#) on [Wednesday, May 1, 2019](#)"

A story based on the newsletter, originally published by Army Times on May 3, launched a wave of feedback on Facebook and Twitter. Many argued that the soldiers involved should be kicked out of the Army, while others countered that a reduction in rank is no small punishment.

"People saying this should be sexual exploitation – there weren't nude photos," a soldier familiar with the case, who spoke on background to avoid retaliation, told Army Times.

The soldiers, both women, had originally both been charged with conspiracy and bullying, Clemons confirmed, with the NCO also charged with abusing a subordinate.

But ultimately, their battalion commander upheld only the bullying charges.

The story described in the April "Vigilant Justice" section of the brigade's newsletter started last June, when the Fort Campbell, Kentucky-based 551st Military Police Company arrived in Germany for a rotation.

The female staff sergeant and private first class were roommates at U.S. Army Garrison Wiesbaden, according to sworn statements in an investigation by the Army Criminal Investigation Command that the soldier speaking on background provided to Army Times.

On June 25, the unnamed soldier said, the private announced that she thought she might be catfishing another soldier in their unit. She had been scrolling through the Whisper app, which lets users post anonymous messages, and readers can see how close by they are. The two began chatting about work, and possibly meeting up to cuddle, according to screenshots of their exchange.

Catfishing commonly refers to using a fictitious identity to seek an online relationship.

Based on the message and the initials of the person doing the posting, she told her roommate, she was pretty sure it came from another private in the platoon. According to screenshots of the conversation, she began chatting with a male private on June 21.

<https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/05/16/in-nude-photo-case-a-commander-dropped-charges-of-conspiracy-and-abuse/>

On June 23, the female private asked the male private if he had any pictures — no face required — and he responded with a shot of his torso. The photo showed his bare chest and stomach, according to a screenshot of a conversation between the two privates provided to Army Times.

She told her roommate about it, and then the NCO confirmed who had sent the photos, telling her junior soldiers to knock it off. She then reported it to her platoon leader and sergeant, the soldier said, who brushed it off as “dumb privates.”

Cut to August, and the incident came up in a commander’s inquiry, according to a sworn statement from a junior enlisted soldier.

- [House passes measure to outlaw nude photo sharing in the military](#)

Three of the NCO’s subordinates told the investigator that they had witnessed the NCO and private looking at Whisper together, according to their statements, with the NCO feeding lines to the private, and then sharing the photo with other soldiers.

But according to text messages provided to Army Times, the staff sergeant was on duty from 4:30 p.m. to midnight when the photo was solicited and received.

Charges came down in January, the soldier with knowledge of the case told Army Times, and on Feb. 5, the staff sergeant appeared for her Article 15 hearing. The sentence was a reduction in rank and 10 days of restriction, according to a proceedings document provided to Army Times.

“I understand the use of the word ‘conspired’ does cause confusion, especially since one of the charges was conspiracy,” Clemons said. “What I can tell you is that the commanders adjudicate each disciplinary action based on the totality of the circumstances and the specific facts of the case. In this case, the soldiers were charged with the offense, but found not guilty.”

Command climate

When it was first published, the story of the two soldiers manipulating another into giving up “nude” photos struck a chord with readers.

“Don’t we have a program that rhymes with harp and starts with S?,” Tyler J. Davis commented on Facebook, invoking the Army’s Sexual Harassment and Assault Response and Prevention program. “Doesn’t said program cover things like this? Forgive me if I’m wrong.”

Others were surprised not to see criminal charges, or even an involuntary separation.

“Speaks volumes that the [staff sergeant] was only reduced to [a sergeant] for doing this to [a private first class],” Dave Crozier wrote. “[She] should have been kicked out.”

Earlier that week, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand dug into Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville after the Defense Department reported negligible progress on reducing sexual assault in the services.

“I am tired of the statement I get over and over from the chain of command: ‘We got this, Ma’am. We got this,’” Gillibrand said. “You don’t have it. You’re failing us. The trajectories of every measurable are going in the wrong direction.”

In addition to no decrease in sexual assault reports or increase in prosecutions and convictions, the DoD report included survey data on toxic command climates and the sexual assault rates of units described that way.

Many service members feel that their chains of command don’t take harassment and assault seriously, Gillibrand said, and so are reluctant to report them.

<https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/05/16/in-nude-photo-case-a-commander-dropped-charges-of-conspiracy-and-abuse/>

Following a widespread [Marine Corps nude photo sharing](#) in 2017, both the Navy and Marine Corps banned exchanging illicit photos specifically, beyond the existing UCMJ statute regarding indecent recording and broadcasting.

Weeks later, then-Rep. Martha McSally, R-Ariz., sponsored the Protecting the Rights of Individuals Against Technological Exploitation Act to address victims of nonconsensual photo sharing. The House of Representatives passed the bill unanimously, but it has been sitting with the Senate Armed Services Committee since May 2017.

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McSally to introduce military sexual assault reform bill

By Jordain Carney

The Hill, May 14, 2019



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Sen. [Martha McSally](#) (R-Ariz.) said on Tuesday that she will introduce legislation to address how the military handles sexual assault claims, including making sexual harassment a stand-alone offense under the military's criminal justice system.

McSally, a member of the Armed Services Committee who is up for reelection in 2020, is expected to introduce the proposal as soon as Wednesday with the goal of getting most, if not all, of it included in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), a defense policy bill that passes every year.

"Our intent is to include as much as possible in the mark up of the defense bill next week," McSally told reporters at a lunch hosted by Winning for Women, an outside group aimed at supporting female GOP candidates. "We've had very positive conversations so far."

McSally's legislation, according to a one-page summary, focuses on changes in four categories: prevention and training, victim support, investigation and prosecution.

"What we're trying to do is team up the JAGs [judge advocate generals] and the investigators early on in the process. ...It needs to not be informal," McSally told an all-female group of reporters.

She said that her focus as she put together a proposal was on what is "the best possible investigation, with the best possible support to the victim, with the due process that the accused deserves as well?"

"The theme for me ... was timeliness is a real challenge of the time it takes for these investigations and the whole judicial process to go on," she said, recounting her conversations with military officials in Arizona. "There's nothing good that happens if these linger for long periods of time."

The legislation comes as the Senate Armed Services Committee is expected to hold its closed-door markup of the NDAA next week. McSally's proposal could be included in the initial draft from Sen. [Jim Inhofe](#) (R-Okla.), the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, or could be offered as an amendment.

McSally's efforts to make sexual harassment a stand-alone crime would line up with plans from the Pentagon.

Acting Defense Secretary [Patrick Shanahan](#) [said earlier this month](#) that sexual harassment would be made a criminal offense at the recommendation of the Sexual Assault Accountability and Investigation Task Force, which was formed at McSally's request.

Sexual assaults in the military increased nearly 38 percent between 2016 and 2018, according to Pentagon data released earlier this month and [obtained by USA Today](#).

McSally disclosed earlier this year that she herself is a survivor of sexual assault committed by a superior officer while she served in the Air Force.

"That was not an easy decision, but I believe it was the right thing to do at the time so that I could help lead on this issue and people could maybe better understand where I was coming from," McSally [recounted in Arizona in March](#).

McSally added on Tuesday that the level of discussion about sexual assault in the military had improved.

"When I went off to basic training ... it wasn't something that was openly discussed," McSally said, "even though this scourge was happening in our society and our military."

<https://thehill.com/homenews/senate/443729-mcsally-to-introduce-military-sexual-assault-reform-bill>

McSally's proposal stops short of backing an effort by Sen. [Kirsten Gillibrand](#) (D-N.Y.) that would remove commanders from the process of deciding whether or not to prosecute sexual assault cases.

McSally said on Tuesday that she "strongly" disagrees with the effort, arguing that commanders are responsible for their unit.

"If you want to fix it ultimately commanders need to own it, they need to continue to own it. They need to be more prepared, more accountable, more equipped but they still need to own it," she said. "Stripping that away from them ... it's going to take our eye off the ball."

Message to VA on sexual harassment: 'Do better'

By Leo Shane III

Military Times, May 14, 2019



Members of a female engagement team with the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit prepare for an exercise aboard USS Kearsarge on Feb. 15, 2019. House Veterans' Affairs Committee members have raised concerns about VA efforts to combat sexual harassment at department facilities. (Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Casey Moore/Navy)

A bipartisan group of lawmakers are pressing [Veterans Affairs officials](#) to “do better” in dealing with [sexual harassment](#) at department facilities, including expanding training on the issue to all employees and contractors.

“Sexual harassment not only creates a barrier to healthcare, but to all resources and benefits that women veterans have earned,” key leaders from the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee wrote in [a letter to VA Secretary Robert Wilkie on Tuesday](#).

“Moreover, VA employees who experience sexual harassment are not empowered to serve veterans to the best of their abilities and talents because they feel uncomfortable and unsafe at work.”

- [Task force to highlight ‘forgotten’ and ‘invisible’ women veterans](#)

The message comes less than two weeks after VA officials testified before the committee on challenges facing women veterans. Several lawmakers then questioned why department anti-harassment training is not mandatory across all VA offices, and why more thorough records of harassment cases are not kept by VA’s central office.

“VA must do better,” states the letter, whose signers include committee Chairman Rep. Mark Takano, D-Calif., and ranking member Rep. Phil Roe, R-Tenn. “As the agency entrusted with providing healthcare and benefits to veterans, VA must take immediate and appropriate action to address toxic workplaces from the local level to VA Central Office.”

A department-backed study released in February found that more than one in four women veterans who visited a VA facility in the prior year experienced inappropriate behavior from men, either employees or other patients.

The findings followed a 2018 report from the Merit System Protection Board which found VA had the highest rate of sexual harassment among employees of any federal agency. About 26 percent of women and 14 percent of men reported sexual harassment incidents.

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In a statement, VA officials said they will respond to lawmakers directly about their concerns but noted the department launched its “End Harassment of Veterans” campaign in 2017, and used training materials from the program at all VA facilities.

- [Meet the women helping VA work for women veterans](#)

“Employees have been trained on culture change efforts, including an awareness of the experiences of women veterans and ways to intervene and respond,” the statement said.

VA officials also note that the department had only six Equal Employment Opportunity findings of discrimination involving sexual harassment over the last two years.

<https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2019/05/14/message-to-va-on-sexual-harassment-do-better/>

But lawmakers said they want the department to go further. They're asking for a plan to require sexual harassment training throughout the 350,000-plus employees at the department, and for more monitoring of complaints at a national level.

Earlier this month, Defense Department officials announced plans to look into making sexual harassment in the ranks a criminal offense, a move they said would also underscore the need for cultural changes within the military after a rise in sexual abuse reports over the last two years.

[Leo Shane III](#) covers Congress, Veterans Affairs and the White House for Military Times. He has covered Washington, D.C. since 2004, focusing on military personnel and veterans policies. His work has earned numerous honors, including a 2009 Polk award, a 2010 National Headliner Award, the IAVA Leadership in Journalism award and the VFW News Media award.

SEE ALSO:

[Lawmakers to VA: End Harassment of Female Vets at Medical Centers](#) [*Military.com*, 2019-05-15]

Report finds Ohio State doc abused 177, officials were aware

By Kantele Franko and Julie Carr Smyth

The Associated Press, May 17, 2019



This May 8, 2019 photo shows a sign for Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. On Friday, May 17, 2019, the school said at least 177 men were sexually abused by Ohio State team doctor Richard Strauss who died years ago, according to findings from a law firm that investigated the accusations, concluding that school leaders knew at the time. (AP Photo/Angie Wang)

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — A now-dead Ohio State team doctor sexually abused at least 177 male students over nearly two decades, and university officials knew what he was doing and did little to

stop him, according to an investigative report released by the school Friday.

Dr. Richard Strauss groped, ogled or otherwise took advantage of young men from 1979 to 1997 — nearly his entire time at Ohio State — while treating athletes from at least 16 sports and working at the student health center and his off-campus clinic, investigators from a law firm hired by the university found.

The report on Strauss, who took his life in 2005, could cost Ohio State heavily by bolstering the lawsuits brought against it by a multitude of victims.

The findings put Strauss in a league with gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar of Michigan State University, who was accused of molesting at least 250 women and girls and is serving what amounts to a life sentence. Michigan State ultimately agreed to a \$500 million settlement with his victims.

In issuing the report, Ohio State President Michael Drake offered “profound regret and sincere apologies to each person who endured Strauss’ abuse.” He called it a “fundamental failure” of the institution and thanked victims for their courage.

Many of Strauss’ accusers who have spoken publicly said they were touched inappropriately during physical exams or leered at in the locker rooms. Many told investigators that they thought his behavior was an “open secret” and that they believed their coaches, trainers and other team doctors knew about it.

The students described the examinations as being “hazed” or going through a “rite of passage.” Athletes joked about Strauss’ behavior, referring to him with nicknames like “Dr. Jelly Paws.”

The investigation found Strauss’ abuse took a variety of forms. Those included forcing student patients to strip naked to purportedly “assess” their conditions; fondling their genitals to the point of erection or ejaculation; and luring them into intimate situations by setting up bogus “medical studies.”

The report concluded that Ohio State personnel knew of complaints and concerns about Strauss’ conduct as early as 1979 but failed for years to investigate or take meaningful action.



Undated file photo of Dr. Richard Strauss. (Ohio State University via AP, File)

At least 50 members of the athletic department staff corroborated victims’ accounts of Strauss’ abuse, the report said. But students’ allegations never left the department or the health center until 1996.

At that point, Strauss was investigated and let go as a team doctor and physician at the health center but was allowed to retain his tenured faculty position.

<https://apnews.com/8100ceaf06c44dc2a85bea4c5daff04f>

Investigators said Strauss set up an off-campus clinic within months, receiving assurances from the associate vice president of health sciences and academic affairs that “there would be no issue” with him engaging in part-time private practice while he was on Ohio State’s faculty. The abuse continued there.

He continued to plead for his job back as an on-campus doctor, finally going to then-President Gordon Gee with a letter in 1997. His pleas were rejected, at which point Strauss was allowed to retire with emeritus status, a mark of distinguished service. A message seeking comment was left Friday for Gee, now president of West Virginia University.

On Friday, some of Strauss’ victims called on the university to take responsibility for its inaction and the harm inflicted by the doctor.

“Dreams were broken, relationships with loved ones were damaged, and the harm now carries over to our children as many of us have become so overprotective that it strains the relationship with our kids,” Kent Kilgore said in a statement.

Steve Estey, an attorney for some of the former students who are suing, said Ohio State should take care of the victims, as it promised six months ago.

“We hope that the report will force OSU to take responsibility for its failure to protect young students,” he said. “If OSU refuses to take responsibility, we will continue with civil litigation and put this in front of a jury for 12 people to judge their actions.”

No one has publicly defended Strauss, though family members have said they were shocked by the allegations.

At least one of the students, a 14-year-old high school wrestler at the time of Strauss’ abuse, told investigators Strauss molested other minors during the course of the doctor’s work with high schools and an Ohio State wrestling camp. No other such accounts were included in unredacted portions of the report.

Previous to Friday’s release, his accusers had alleged [more than 20 school officials](#) and staff members, including two athletic directors and a coach who is now a [congressman](#) , were aware of concerns about Strauss but didn’t stop him. Neither that congressman, Republican Rep. Jim Jordan, nor any other coaches are mentioned by name in the report.

The lawsuits against Ohio State that are headed for [mediation](#) . They seek unspecified damages.

Separately, the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights also is [examining](#) whether Ohio State responded “promptly and equitably” to students’ complaints.

Ohio State alumni have said they complained about Strauss as early as the late 1970s, and the university had at least one [documented complaint](#) from 1995.

Ohio State Medical Board records indicate the university reported Strauss to the board at some point but include no details. The board said it never disciplined him.

Associated Press writers John Sewer in Toledo and Andrew Welsh-Huggins and Mitch Stacy in Columbus contributed to this report.