

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.

How far should victims have to go to prove military sexual trauma? [Natalie Gross, *Military Times*, 21 June 2019]

- The Department of Veterans Affairs is opposing a new bill that would expand access to disability benefits for survivors of military sexual trauma.
- Department officials characterized the legislation at a congressional hearing Thursday [June 18] as too broad, saying it would require the VA to approve claims based on a veteran's word alone without any corroborating evidence.
- But after a [recent inspector general report](#) found the VA may have wrongly refused benefits to thousands of military sexual assault victims in recent years, supporters of the Servicemembers and Veterans Empowerment and Support Act of 2019 say changes are necessary to keep the department from retraumatizing victims who deserve to be compensated for what they went through—even if there's no paper trail.

[How far should victims have to go to prove military sexual trauma?](#)

Lawmakers introduce bill to rescind 20 Medals of Honor issued in connection with a massacre of Native Americans [Brian Mackley, *Military Times*, 25 June 2019]

- On a day the first Medal of Honor was bestowed on a living Iraq War recipient, lawmakers and members of the Sioux nation announced their plan to take away those awarded for what became known as The Wounded Knee Massacre.
- The Remove the Stain Act was introduced Tuesday by U.S. Reps. Denny Heck (D-Washington), Deb Haaland (D-New Mexico), and Paul Cook (R-California). It was named for the U.S. military's massacre of more than 200 Lakota Indians, confined to a camp near Wounded Knee Creek, South Dakota, on Dec. 29, 1890.
- Eventually, 20 men were awarded the military's highest honor for that engagement, and the bill seeks to address what proponents call a historic wrong.

[Lawmakers introduce bill to rescind 20 Medals of Honor issued in connection with a massacre of Native Americans](#)

The young are regarded as the most tolerant generation. That's why results of this LGBTQ survey are "alarming" [Susan Miller, *USA TODAY*, 24 June 2019]

- Young people are growing less tolerant of LGBTQ individuals, a jarring turn for a generation traditionally considered embracing and open, a survey released Monday shows.
- The number of Americans 18 to 34 who are comfortable interacting with LGBTQ people slipped from 53% in 2017 to 45% in 2018—the only age group to show a decline, according to the annual [Accelerating Acceptance](#) report.
- "We count on the narrative that young people are more progressive and tolerant," John Gerzema, CEO of [The Harris Poll](#), told USA TODAY. "These numbers are very alarming and signal a looming social crisis in discrimination."

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Culture

High court upholds precedents on deference to agencies

By Jessica Gresko

The Associated Press, June 26, 2019

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Wednesday rejected a conservative push to limit the power of federal agencies.

The high court declined to overrule two past cases that had been criticized by conservatives as giving unelected officials vast lawmaking power. But the way the justices clarified the older rulings led one justice to suggest that while the cases hadn't been overruled they'd been left "on life support."

Chief Justice John Roberts broke with his more conservative colleagues and joined the court's four liberal justices in refusing to overrule the earlier cases. The court's other conservatives were ready to, in the words of Justice Neil Gorsuch, "say goodbye" to the decisions.

The issue of overturning precedents is front and center during this term of the court as observers are watching to see how far and how fast a newly more conservative court is willing to go in its decisions. The court's [ruling](#) was something of a surprise because when the court takes a case with the specific purpose of reconsidering whether to overrule a past decision it is generally a signal it is ready to do so.

The case the court was considering has to do with how courts should respond when an agency — such as the Transportation Security Administration or Mine Safety and Health Administration — writes a regulation that is ambiguous. Previous cases said judges should defer to an agency's interpretation of its own ambiguous regulation if the interpretation is reasonable.

Justice Elena Kagan wrote that the approach makes sense: "Want to know what a rule means? Ask its author."

Kagan, writing for a majority of the court, reiterated that an agency has "significant leeway to say what its own rules mean." But she also explained the limits of when deference applies, noting among other things that the agency's reading must still be reasonable and deference shouldn't apply unless the regulation is genuinely ambiguous.

Conservatives have criticized the Supreme Court's deference decisions for some time. Before his death three years ago Justice Antonin Scalia, who himself wrote the unanimous 1997 *Auer v. Robbins* decision the court was being asked to overrule, said it should be abandoned. Some of his conservative colleagues similarly questioned the decision and one from 1945 that preceded it, *Bowles v. Seminole Rock & Sand Co.*

Gorsuch wrote for himself and three fellow conservatives that it should have been easy for the justices to "say goodbye to *Auer v. Robbins*." Instead, he said his colleagues left it on "life support." He said the "new and nebulous qualifications and limitations" that his colleagues in the majority imposed mean the doctrine of agency deference "emerges maimed and enfeebled — in truth, zombified."

The specific case before the justices involved Vietnam veteran James Kisor. Kisor has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and has tangled with the Department of Veterans Affairs over disability benefits. Kisor said he should get benefits back to the 1980s while the VA, interpreting its own regulation, disagreed, saying he should only get benefits back to 2006. The justices sent Kisor's case back to a lower court to be reviewed in light of the court's decision.

The case is 18-15, *Kisor v. Wilkie*.

LGBTQ news coverage still evolving 50 years after Stonewall

By David Bauder

The Associated Press, June 21, 2019



In this Friday June 14, 2019, photo, Stonewall Inn visitors read news clipping headlining the 1969 riots that followed a police raid of the bar in New York. Some of the coverage of rioting was itself a source of the fury that led Stonewall to become a synonym for the fight for gay rights. (AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews)

NEW YORK (AP) — During the 1969 series of riots that followed a police raid of the Stonewall Inn, the New York Daily News headlined a story that quickly became infamous: “Homo Nest Raided, Queen Bees are Stinging Mad.”

Some of the coverage of rioting outside the gay bar — unimaginable today in mainstream publications for its mocking tone — was itself a source of the fury that led Stonewall to become a synonym for the fight for gay rights.

Fifty years later, media treatment of the LGBTQ community has changed and is still changing.

“The progress has been extraordinary, with the caveat that we still have a lot to do,” said Cathy Renna, a former executive for the media watchdog GLAAD, who runs her own media consulting firm.

Before Stonewall, mainstream media coverage of gays was generally nonexistent or consisted of negative, police blotter items.

When a small group demonstrated against government treatment outside the White House in 1965, a newspaper headline said, “Protesters Call Government Unfair to Deviants,” noted Josh Howard, whose film “The Lavender Scare,” about an Eisenhower-era campaign against gays and lesbians in government, aired on PBS this week.

A 1966 Time magazine article called homosexuality “a pathetic little second-rate substitute for reality, a pitiable flight from life. As such it deserves fairness, compassion, understanding and, when possible, treatment. But it deserves no encouragement, no glamorization, no rationalization, no fake status as minority martyrdom, no sophistry about simple differences in taste and above all, no pretense that it is anything but a pernicious sickness.”

This is the sort of thing that Howard, who was 14 at the time of Stonewall, read about people like himself when he was young.

“It’s a hard way to grow up,” said the longtime CBS News producer. “I sort of realized that it was safe for me to be in the closet.”



A framed newspaper clipping hangs inside the Stonewall Inn, covering the 1969 riots that followed a police raid of the bar. (AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews)

Stonewall got some straightforward coverage at the time, although stories in The New York Times and the New York Post were buried well inside the newspapers. An Associated Press story from June 30, 1969, said “police cleared the streets in the Sheridan Square area of Greenwich Village early Sunday as crowds of young men

complained of police harassment of homosexuals.”

<https://www.apnews.com/a9b897b30e854b14aacc015ab5b414b5>

New York television stations ignored it, so the visual record amounts to a handful of still pictures.

The Daily News story was filled with slurs, and it began: “She sat there with her legs crossed, the lashes of her mascara-coated eyes beating like the wings of a hummingbird. She was angry. She was so upset she hadn’t bothered to shave.”

At the time, many demonstrators were more upset with riot coverage by the now-defunct alternative newsweekly The Village Voice, said Edward Alwood, author of “Straight News: Gays, Lesbians and the News Media.”

One Voice writer holed up with police inside Stonewall and said he wished he was armed. “The sound filtering in doesn’t suggest dancing faggots anymore,” Howard Smith wrote. “It sounds like a powerful rage bent on vendetta.”

Another Voice writer, Lucian Truscott IV, repeatedly referred to “faggot” and “faggotry” and said of the rioters at one point, “limp wrists were forgotten.”

“That event has generally been seen through political lenses,” Alwood said. “It was also a wake-up call for the media.”



In this 1972 photo, members of the Gay Activists Alliance hold a protest against the New York Daily News for its use of homophobic slurs in its coverage of the LGBTQ community. (Rudy Grillo/The LGBTQ Community Center National History Archive, via AP)

The immediate impact was growth and a heightened profile for news outlets specifically oriented to gays and lesbians, said Eric Marcus, author of the book “Making Gay History” and host of a podcast of the same name.

Marcus wrote in an essay this week about how Time magazine’s 1966 story “just about burned the skin off my face as I read it.”

Time didn’t cover Stonewall, but in October 1969 published [a cover story](#) about the emerging civil rights movement. While more straightforward in its reporting than the essay three years earlier, the story “was still dripping with sarcasm and contempt,” he said.

Time published Marcus’ piece as part of its Stonewall anniversary coverage, although it didn’t apologize for its past work.

While outright hate within the mainstream media subsided through the years, discomfort and stereotyping persisted. The go-to gay image for most publications was a silhouette of two men holding hands.

Coverage of gays in the military, for example, focused on “showers and submarines,” Renna said, or the unease of straight males in the presence of gays. Lesbians were barely mentioned, a sign of little awareness of diversity.

Through her work at GLAAD, Renna saw how Ellen DeGeneres’ revelation that she was a lesbian, both the ABC sitcom character she played at the time and the comedian in real life, was pivotal to promoting understanding.

Renna has urged journalists to pay attention to their language. Being gay is not a lifestyle, she notes; “Having a dog is a lifestyle.” She also urges the use of “sexual orientation” as opposed to “sexual preference,” a recognition that being gay isn’t a choice.

“The vast majority of journalists are not homophobic,” she said. “They’re homo-ignorant.”

<https://www.apnews.com/a9b897b30e854b14aacc015ab5b414b5>

Renna, who wears her hair short and favors tailored suits, is used to being mistaken for a man. Until about a decade ago, people she would correct generally shrugged. As a sign of changing attitudes, “now people fall over themselves to apologize once they realize I’m a girl,” she said.

A [handbook of terminology](#) for news organizations that is put out by LGBTQ journalists has helped increase awareness.

There are still missteps. The AP decreed in 2013 that its journalists would not use the word “husband” or “wife” in reference to a legally married gay or lesbian couple. After a protest, the AP reversed its call a week later.

Two 2017 entries in the [AP Stylebook](#), considered the authoritative reference for journalists on the use of language, illustrate how far things have come since the “queen bees” days 50 years ago. The AP endorses the use of “they, them or theirs” as singular pronouns (replacing he or she) if the story subject requests it, although the AP urges care in writing to avoid confusion.

The stylebook also reminds readers that not all people fit under one of two categories for gender, “so avoid references to both, either or opposite sexes.”

Gender identification remains an object of confusion for many journalists. Activists also urge news organizations to be aware of people who are emboldened to lash out at the LGBTQ community by the divided politics of the past few years.

With the Stonewall anniversary, Marcus, of “Making Gay History,” has been busy working with news organizations doing stories about the event.

One publication he finds particularly interested and responsible in marking the occasion is the New York Daily News. The News on June 7 wrote an editorial recognizing its unseemly moment in history.

“We here at the Daily News played an unhelpful role in helping create a climate that treated the victims as the punchline of jokes, not as dignified individuals with legitimate complaints about mistreatment,” the newspaper wrote. “For that, we apologize.”

It was the newspaper’s second apology for its 1969 story in four years.

The young are regarded as the most tolerant generation. That's why results of this LGBTQ survey are 'alarming'

By Susan Miller

USA TODAY, June 24, 2019



VIDEO. *LGBTQ rights have come a long way in the U.S. But the community still faces threats in the form of legalization, discrimination and even violence. Just the FAQs, USA TODAY*

Young people are growing less tolerant of LGBTQ individuals, a jarring turn for a generation traditionally considered embracing and open, a survey released Monday shows.

The number of Americans 18 to 34 who are comfortable interacting with LGBTQ people slipped from 53% in 2017 to 45% in 2018 – the only age group to show a decline, according to the annual [Accelerating Acceptance report](#). And that is down from 63% in 2016.

Driving the dilution of acceptance are young women whose overall comfort levels plunged from 64% in 2017 to 52% in 2018, says the survey conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of [LGBTQ advocacy group GLAAD](#).

“We count on the narrative that young people are more progressive and tolerant,” John Gerzema, CEO of [The Harris Poll](#), told USA TODAY. “These numbers are very alarming and signal a looming social crisis in discrimination.”

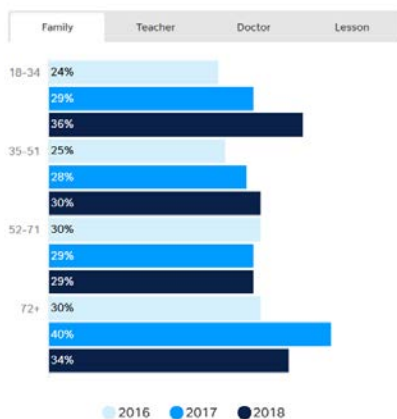
Among the findings:

- 36% of young people said they were uncomfortable learning a family member was LGBTQ, compared with 29% in 2017.
- 34% were uncomfortable learning their doctor was LGBTQ vs. 27% a year earlier.
- 39% were uncomfortable learning their child had a school lesson on LGBTQ history vs. 30% in 2017.

Young people's discomfort rises with LGBTQ

Percentage of non-LGBTQ population, by age bracket, uncomfortable with:

- Learning **family member** is LGBTQ;
- Having child placed in class with LGBTQ **teacher**;
- Learning **doctor** is LGBTQ;
- Learning child had LGBTQ **history lesson** in school



SOURCE Harris Poll on behalf of GLAAD; GRAPHIC George Petras/USA TODAY



Tolerance takes a hit: [Americans less accepting of LGBT people in 2017](#) [2018-01-25]

The negative shift for the young is surprising, said Sarah Kate Ellis, GLAAD president and CEO. When GLAAD delved into the numbers, the group found that the younger generation was coming in contact with more LGBTQ people, particularly individuals who are non-binary and don't identify simply as lesbian or gay.

“This newness they are experiencing could be leading to this erosion. It's a newness that takes time for people to understand. Our job is to educate about non-conformity,” she said.

'Toxic culture' 50 years after Stonewall

The survey results come during Pride 2019 and on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the [Stonewall riots](#), which sparked the LGBTQ rights movement.

They also land at a dark hour politically and culturally for the LGBTQ community amid a rise in inflammatory rhetoric and dozens of policy setbacks, such as a ban on transgender people in the military and religious exemption laws that

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/06/24/lgbtq-acceptance-millennials-decline-glaad-survey/1503758001/>

can lead to discrimination, Ellis and Gerzema said. Both are a likely force behind the young's pushback on tolerance, they said.



A new survey out during Pride 2019 shows young people have grown less accepting of LGBTQ individuals. (Photo: Robert Deutsch, USA TODAY)

The young are bombarded by hate speech on social platforms from viral videos to “mean tweets,” Gerzema said. “Our toxic culture is enveloping young people. It instills fear, alienation, but also permissibility” that could sway “impressionable” young minds on what is acceptable.

And there is a more menacing side, Ellis said. “We are seeing a stark increase in violence in the community.” GLAAD has documented more than 40 incidents of LGBTQ hate violence since Jan. 1.

Two recent high-profile incidents: On June 16, [a young gay couple were assaulted](#) outside a popular strip of bars in Washington, D.C., in what police are investigating as a hate crime. A few weeks earlier, [a Detroit man was charged in a triple homicide](#) in which two gay men and one transgender woman were deliberately targeted, police say.

The FBI released statistics in November showing [a 17% increase in overall hate crimes](#) in 2017. Of 7,175 reported crimes, more than 1,200 were based on sexual orientation or gender identity bias.

Stonewall Forever: [50 years after the raid that sparked the LGBTQ movement, monument goes digital](#)

The transgender community has been especially hard hit. In 2018, there were at least 26 deaths of transgender individuals in the U.S. because of violence, mostly black transgender women, according to the [Human Rights Campaign](#), which has tracked 10 deaths so far this year.

The situation is so grim that the American Medical Association warned this month of “[an epidemic of violence](#)” against transgender people, particularly those of color.



VIDEO. *Shear Avory, a non-binary transgender twenty-year-old who was subjected to conversion therapy, shares how they cope with suicidal ideation. USA TODAY*

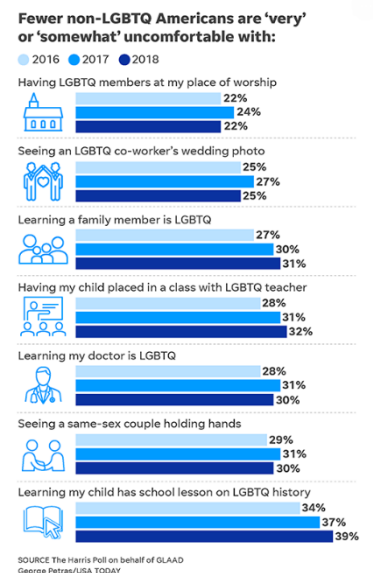
'Tolerance parsed out'

The increase in violence and discrimination mirrors the trajectory of the acceptance survey. The report, first commissioned in 2014, reflected positive momentum from historic gains for LGBTQ rights – such as the same-sex marriage ruling – in its first three years. But that shifted in 2017 with fallout from the presidential election, advocates say.

Still, there is cause for optimism this year, Ellis said. Nearly half of all non-LGBTQ adults, or 49%, are classified in the survey as “allies” with high levels of tolerance. That is the same number as 2017, and “that is a big deal,” she said.

Support for equal rights is also stable, with eight out of 10 backing equality for LGBTQ people for the third consecutive year.

Want a dad hug? Free dad hugs at Pride show the lasting effect parents' rejection can have on LGBTQ kids



SOURCE: The Harris Poll on behalf of GLAAD
George Petras/USA TODAY

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/06/24/lgbtq-acceptance-millennials-decline-glaad-survey/1503758001/>

Ellis is confident the younger generation can rise again as beacons of unbiased values. When numbers dipped a year ago for young males, GLAAD went to where male audiences consume content: video games. The advocacy group worked with the industry to introduce diverse characters and help shape attitudes. The group has similar outreach plans for targeting young women in a popular female venue, country music concerts, she said.

It's crucial LGBTQ advocates stay vigilant, Gerzema said. "In this toxic age, tolerance –even among youths – now seems to be parsed out. Nothing today should be taken for granted."

Discrimination

Whistleblowers testify that fear, retribution are still widespread at VA

By Leo Shane III

Military Times, June 25, 2019



Speaking up about problems at the VA can be a career killer, several whistleblowers testified at a Congressional hearing Tuesday. (Charles Dharapak/AP)

Whistleblowers within the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) testified Tuesday that they still face hostile opposition from leadership despite public promises their concerns would be thoroughly investigated, and that a new office to oversee that work has proven largely ineffective.

Department officials criticized the testimony as a one-sided attack on VA by [House Democrats](#), since they were not invited to participate. But members of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee said the testimony raised [serious concerns](#) about systemic retaliation against employees who raise concerns about problems in the workplace.

"We can't allow employees who come forward with important information to be intimidated," said Rep. Chris Pappas, D-N.H. and chairman of the committee's oversight panel.

- [VA left millions for suicide prevention unspent, report finds \[2018-12-18\]](#)

Tuesday's testimony included emotional testimony from several VA employees who spoke of a culture of "not airing our dirty laundry" and covering up problems within the department health care system.

Dr. Katherine Mitchell, one of the physicians who brought to light wait-time problems at the Phoenix VA Health Care System in 2014, said she has been touted by the department as a "whistleblower success story" but still faces aggression and retaliation for her role in highlighting those problems. That includes marginalizing her job opportunities, and local leadership undermining her standing with colleagues.

"The retribution is vicious and disruptive to everyone," she said. "Anyone with a reasonable mind would not speak up in this ... malignant leadership culture."

Dr. Minu Aghevli, the former coordinator for opioid treatment programs at the VA Maryland Health Care System, said her clinical privileges were revoked in April after she reported new concerns about several veterans care issues. For the last five years she has raised alarms about improper wait list practices in local hospitals, including falsifying data about veterans appointments.

Just a day before her testimony, VA officials informed her they would work to fire her from her post.

"I feel like I'm being used as a threat against employees who may speak up about patient care concerns," she said. "I don't want to be a pawn."

VA officials under President Donald Trump have repeatedly promised to end all retaliation against whistleblowers, and set up with congressional backing a new Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection to better address those employees' concerns and prevent punishment for their actions.

But Jackie Garrick, founder of Whistleblowers of America, said the office "has caused more of them more harm because it is plagued with deficiencies related to timeliness, unfair processes and inadequate staffing." Leaders at the Project on Government Oversight said they worry the office has become a central repository to track potentially problematic employees, instead of an investigative agency.

<https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2019/06/25/whistleblowers-testify-that-fear-retribution-are-still-widespread-at-va/>

VA staffers were not invited to testify at Tuesday's hearing, which Republican members of the panel lamented as providing an incomplete picture of the situation. Pappas said he plans to hold a hearing with those officials soon.

But VA Secretary Robert Wilkie, in a letter to the committee Tuesday morning, said the decision to exclude the department from this hearing amounted to politicizing the event. Several of the cases featured at the hearing predate both his term in office and Trump's, and recent improvements were not covered in the testimony.

- [VA watchdog accuses leadership of withholding access to employee complaints \[2018-06-19\]](#)

"When the committee holds a hearing to air criticisms of the department while simultaneously preventing the department from participating to offer context and defend itself, the committee's efforts risk appearing more like a political press conference than a hearing aimed at a balanced look at serious issues," he wrote.

"If this is how the committee intends to conduct oversight of the department in the future, an exclusionary approach could chip away at the committee's oft-stated goal of bipartisanship."

Committee spokesman Miguel Salazar said the department's complaints are unfounded, and officials there have been hostile to any oversight work in recent months.

"VA has refused to appear before our committee when called and answer poignant questions about how its practices are impacting veterans," he said. "It has continued to slow walk key document requests and provide inadequate witnesses for hearings.

"Their concerns are misplaced and consistent with a department hell bent on picking and choosing how they will comply with this committee's mandate."

Meanwhile, whistleblowers who testified at the hearing said they don't see the problems as a political issue, noting serious issues with retaliation stretching back into the previous presidential administration.

"Reporting is asking to have your career killed and life threatened," Garrick said. "That's unfair."

[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.

Diversity

Aided by a female squad leader, US soldiers demonstrate peacekeeping with women in mind

By J.P. Lawrence

Stars and Stripes, June 26, 2019



Army Staff Sgt. Jenna Ross, left, talks to female actors posing as civilians in a mock village in Chilikemer training area in Kazakhstan during Exercise Steppe Eagle on June 23, 2019.

J.P. LAWRENCE/STARS AND STRIPES

CHILIKEMER TRAINING AREA, Kazakhstan – Four Arizona National Guardsmen went house to house in a mock village set up on a grassy plain in rural Kazakhstan, searching for an enemy weapons cache.

At many of the houses, women acting out the scenario during the Steppe Eagle exercise told the American soldiers that their culture did not allow them to enter unless a female servicemember was present.

That’s where this particular squad of guardsmen stood out: Led by the first female infantry squad leader in the Arizona National Guard, Staff Sgt. Jenna Ross, the squad entered and searched the houses for the hidden weapons.

Not long after starting the searches in the village, Spc. Efren Armenta told Ross, “Jackpot.” He’d found the stash.

The scenario was part of training on how gender can impact peacekeeping and stability operations.

Ross, a member of Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 158th Infantry Regiment, said her presence helped bring her squad’s search mission to a successful conclusion.

“It’s definitely an asset to have females in the military, specifically in the infantry, because males can’t do certain things in some cultures,” she said.

The weeklong Steppe Eagle exercise involved more than 400 troops from host country Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, the U.K. and the U.S., with observers from India, Turkey and Uzbekistan.



Army Staff Sgt. Jenna Ross, center, leads troops as they search for a weapons cache in a mock village in Chilikemer training area in Kazakhstan during Exercise Steppe Eagle on June 23, 2019. Ross, the first female infantry soldier in the Arizona Army National Guard, is now a squad leader.

J.P. LAWRENCE/STARS AND STRIPES

Several Steppe Eagle drills included gender as a factor. In one, villagers come to the gates of bases to report that they had been raped. Another tested whether soldiers could spot signs that a woman was the victim of human trafficking.

Steppe Eagle also included training on how sexual and gender-based violence affect peacekeeping efforts, said Capt. Jessica Simpson, a member of the British Army’s 77th Brigade.

“We looked into how you can integrate a gender perspective into the full planning process,” Simpson said.

Kazakhstan’s ground forces are due to deploy later this year to Lebanon to serve on the U.N. peacekeeping mission. The focus on gender at this exercise comes as other peacekeeping units have faced accusations of rape and sexual misconduct in Bosnia and several parts of Africa.

<https://www.stripes.com/news/aided-by-a-female-squad-leader-us-soldiers-demonstrate-peacekeeping-with-women-in-mind-1.587667>

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres pledged to make ending the “scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by UN personnel, including peacekeepers” a priority of the global body.

'A novelty'

Ross enlisted in 2009 and has spent her career working as a medic and recruiter, with a stint as a drill sergeant. She joined the infantry last year to challenge herself, she said.

In November, she attended an Advanced Leader Course for infantry sergeants and learned how to be a squad leader.

“There were no other females,” Ross said. “I was a novelty for the instructors.”

Ross acknowledged she had a lot to learn about being an infantry squad leader. She has adopted a humble but determined leadership style, she said.

“I’m not the type to give up or quit very easily. I’m stubborn to a fault,” Ross said, offering advice on what women can expect if they, too, join the infantry — which Ross hoped they will.

When she first came to her unit, Ross said, some of the men mistook her for a victim’s advocate for sexual harassment, assault response and prevention. She has also noticed generational differences regarding attitudes of women in combat roles.

“The younger generation of soldiers – my squad – they’re cool with it,” Ross said. “The older generation of soldiers, who are not used to females even being in the military ... it’s eye-opening for them.”

All military services were ordered in 2013 by then-Defense Secretary Leon Panetta to lift a long-standing ban on women in combat roles. The services were given until January 2016 to fully integrate or ask for special exemptions.

Prior to the ban being lifted, the Army and Marine Corps barred women from jobs in combat arms, including in the infantry, artillery and armored divisions. The Air Force and Navy had greater gender integration but women were excluded from special operations units.

Since 2016, the Army has transferred more than 1,000 women into combat arms specialties and at least 500 women now serve in each of the service’s active brigade combat teams, Army Lt. Gen. Thomas Seamands said in a statement last month.

There are currently no other female infantry soldiers in the Arizona National Guard, Ross said, but she hopes others will join her.

“I’m excited to be part of a movement that’s nationwide,” Ross said.

lawrence.jp@stripes.com

Twitter: [@jplawrence3](https://twitter.com/jplawrence3)

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Bill Would Require Spanish Translations on All VA Fact Sheets

By Patricia Kime

Military.com, June 22, 2019



The former Colorado Army National Guard armory in Grand Junction, Colorado, is now the home of the Western Region One Source. This facility connects Western Slope service members, veterans, and their families with benefits, service providers, and community partners. (Division of Military and Veterans Affairs-West photo by Joanne Iglesias)

Addressing an audience at a House Veterans Affairs Committee hearing Thursday in Spanish, Committee Chairman Rep. Mark Takano, D-California, pressed for legislation that would require all VA fact sheets to be published in English and Spanish. A bill sponsored by Rep. Gil Cisneros, D-California, would do that.

Takano, whose Riverside area district is 60% Hispanic, said he is concerned that the fact sheets and training modules for the Mission Act, the legislation that introduced new urgent and community care programs for veterans earlier this month, were only printed in English.

This caused a delay in implementation of the act in Puerto Rico, as employees needed to translate and reproduce the materials on their own when a contracted firm's translations proved inadequate.

Takano also noted that another vital service, the Veterans Crisis Line, which provides help to veterans struggling with mental health issues and thoughts of suicide, operates only in English. And while the VA Medical Center in Puerto Rico has established its own local crisis line in Spanish, the line did not answer when Takano tried to call it.

"Think about that for a moment: help is only available at the VA if you understand English," Takano said.



Rep. Mark Takano of California's 41st congressional district, right, talks to 163d Attack Wing Vice Commander Col. Keith Ward, second from right, while touring the wing's new Hap Arnold Center Feb. 23, 2017 at March Air Reserve Base, California. (Air National Guard photo/Crystal Housman)

Speaking, reading and writing English fluently is a requirement to serve in the U.S. military. But with the veteran population expected to rise from 7% to 11.2% of the total U.S. population in the next 20 years, Takano said failing to provide veterans with "clear explanations of their benefits in Spanish" meant they would miss out on crucial [benefits](#) available to them, such as the [GI Bill](#), [VA home loans](#) or [health care](#).

"No es suficiente que el Departamento de Veteranos ya tenga una regla en vigor. Nosotros, como miembros de esta cámara legislativa, tenemos que crear una ley con este requisito y también asegurar que el comité ejerza su mandato de supervisión sobre este departamento," Takano said.

That's roughly translated as, "It's not enough that this is a VA regulation; we must make this the law."

A department official said VA agrees language should not be a barrier to services and it already publishes many forms in both English and Spanish, including enrollment forms and annual benefits guide.

<https://www.military.com/daily-news/2019/06/21/bill-would-require-spanish-translations-all-va-fact-sheets.html>

VA is also implementing a language access plan that is more comprehensive than the legislation currently being considered, said Larry Mole, VA's chief consultant for population health services.

The VA's program includes maintaining a Language Access Working Group responsible for implementing a language access plan across VA facilities. The goal, according to the plan, is for personnel at VA facilities to identify veterans, caregivers and their advocates who have limited English proficiency and ensure they have access to translators, translations and other language services.

"Given the breadth and complexity of the VA [language] program, VA favors this more systematic and flexible approach, as opposed to a statutory mandate for one form of document," Mole said.

He assured Takano that VA would look into the issues of VA Mission Act implementation and the Veterans Crisis Line in Puerto Rico.

According to VA, veterans who feel they have not received appropriate language assistance or were denied help can call the VA's External Complaints Program at (888) 566-3942.

-- *Patricia Kime can be reached at Patricia.Kime@Military.com. Follow her on Twitter at [@patriciakime](https://twitter.com/patriciakime).*

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Citizenship for military service? California Democrat renews bill to let Dreamers enlist

By Kate Irby

McClatchy Washington Bureau, June 20, 2019



Recruits with special skills are sworn into our military despite a lack of citizenship. The MAVNI program welcome highly skilled individuals who want to become Americans into our military, and, if they serve honorably for five years, provides them an expedited path to citizenship. MAVNI Archives

Rep. Josh Harder knows there's little chance that a big immigration bill will pass in Congress this year. But so-called Dreamers — people who came to the country illegally as children — in his California district want any path to citizenship they can get.

"I've heard from Dreamers, 'Just give me any route,'" Harder, D-Turlock, told McClatchy.

Those conversations led to an unusual move by the freshman Democrat. He's taking up legislation that was the brainchild of his opponent and predecessor, Republican Rep. Jeff Denham, that would allow Dreamers to both enlist in the military and obtain citizenship through service in the armed forces.

Harder is reintroducing the bill at a time when immigrants who want to join the military and subsequently obtain citizenship are facing even tougher odds of achieving their goals. Recent figures from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services show enlisted immigrants are denied citizenship at a higher rate than civilian immigrants under President Donald Trump's administration.

"Right now, we're penalizing service," Harder said. "I don't think anyone wants that."

Dreamers as a group have never been permitted to enlist, although immigrants with legal permanent resident status and certain immigrants with specialized skills can serve in the U.S. military.

Harder's bill, called the Enlist Act, defines eligible candidates as those "unlawfully present in the United States on December 31, 2012, who: (1) have been continuously present in the United States since such date; (2) were younger than 15 years of age when they initially entered the United States; and (3) are otherwise eligible for original enlistment in a regular component of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard."

That language is meant to make all Dreamers eligible under the bill, rather than just Dreamers who signed up for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program under former President Barack Obama.

But there's a major problem with that, said retired Army Reserve Lt. Col. Margaret Stock, an attorney who specializes in representing immigrant soldiers in her private practice. She called the bill's language "unworkable," for anyone familiar with how military enlistment works.

"Military recruiters aren't immigration lawyers and cannot tell if someone 'is eligible for' DACA," Stock said. "Recruiters need a valid Social Security card and an immigration status that can be verified immediately and electronically by (the Department of Homeland Security). Otherwise they are prohibited from enlisting a person."

She said the bill would need to include language that specifically says those who signed up for DACA are eligible. Staff of the House Armed Services Committee pushed back on that idea, however, saying the Department of Defense could set up criteria to vet and verify candidates who apply under the bill.

"Just as they do under current law, the DoD will still have to identify the criteria any individual must meet in order to enlist — this bill does not change that," the staff member said.

<https://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/politics-government/article231720323.html>

Currently, only immigrants who have legal permanent resident status, known as a green card, can join the military. Dreamers cannot obtain green cards.

Certain immigrants could also apply through the Military Accessions Vital to National Interests program, known as Mavni, which allows immigrants with specialized skills in areas such as languages and medicine to join. Dreamers can enlist through that program, but it has been severely curtailed by the Trump administration.

Under Denham, an Air Force veteran, the Enlist Act had 219 cosponsors, a majority of members in the House of Representatives. But it was never taken up by Republican leadership in the House and had no companion bill in the Senate. Efforts by Denham to add the language of the act to military budgets and spending bills always failed.

Harder's bill, introduced Thursday, has 17 bipartisan cosponsors so far. "If there's anything that could actually get across the finish line on immigration, it would be this and fixing the agriculture labor visas," Harder said.

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.

The rate of denying to enlisted immigrants spiked to 20 percent under Trump in the first quarter of 2018, and has mostly remained at a higher rate than civilians throughout Trump's presidency.

The military has had persistent recruitment issues recently. It missed its original goal for Army recruiting by 6,500 soldiers last year, according to Stock. Not enough people who are eligible to join the military want to join the military, she said, which means officials either need to make joining more attractive or open their ranks to more people, namely immigrants. That has to be done through Congress.

"The military has a fundamental demographic problem right now — it's supposed to look like America and it doesn't," Stock said.

McClatchy reporter Tara Copp contributed to this story.

[Kate Irby](#) is based in Washington, D.C. and reports on issues important to McClatchy's California newspapers, including the Sacramento Bee, Fresno Bee and Modesto Bee. She previously reported on breaking news in D.C., politics in Florida for the Bradenton Herald and politics in Ohio for the Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Coast Guard to Pay for Moms on Duty to Ship Breast Milk

By Patricia Kime

Military.com, June 25, 2019



An Airman sets up a breastfeeding pump in a breastfeeding room at Joint Base Charleston, S.C. (US Air Force/Tenley Long)

The [U.S. Coast Guard](#) announced Tuesday it will implement a program to pay shipping costs for service members who send breast milk to their babies when they are underway or on other official travel.

The reimbursement program, funded by Coast Guard Mutual Assistance, will pay up to \$750 a year per household for shipping. It will be available to all active-duty personnel, Public Health Services officers and Navy chaplains detailed to the Coast Guard, reserve members on active duty status, spouses on business travel and Coast Guard civilian employees.

The new benefit is among a host of initiatives underway in the sea service to attract and keep women. In [a Coast Guard-wide message](#), Rear Adm. Matthew Sibley, acting assistant commandant for Human Resources, said feedback from the service's Women's Retention Study and Holistic Analysis, contributed the new policy's creation.

Earlier this year, Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz promised numerous changes in the coming year designed to keep women in the service, attract female recruits and increase diversity.

Women constitute nearly 15 percent of the Coast Guard, but they tend to leave at rates higher than men after about five years – usually during the time when they start having families.

Groundbreaking changes in the past few months designed to strike a work-life balance for members include implementing a program that allows reserve members to backfill active-duty positions when personnel are on maternity, convalescent or caregiver leave.

The Coast Guard also has [eliminated gender-specific pronouns from promotion packages](#) and professional evaluations. And it is [exploring changes to physical standards](#), which are based on body mass and require a tape measurement of all personnel twice a year.

Schultz has said the standards disproportionately affect women and cause undue stress on service members.

To receive the breast milk shipment reimbursement, personnel must be away from home on temporary duty, [deployment](#), traveling on official business or have an excused absence.

They may apply for reimbursement for any period where they are away from home for more than 72 hours and must submit their request for payment within 60 days of returning home.

A receipt is required. Any service member who has shipped breast milk prior to the date of ALCOAST 215/19 can apply for reimbursement for shipments since Jan. 1. They have until Aug. 31 to request the benefit.

More details on the program can be found on [the Coast Guard Mutual Assistance website](#).

-- Patricia Kime can be reached at Patricia.Kime@Military.com. Follow her on Twitter at [@patriciakime](#).

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Next rescue ship dubbed ‘Cherokee Nation’

By The Associated Press

Navy Times, June 21, 2019



An artist rendering of the future towing, salvage, and rescue ship Cherokee Nation (photo illustration by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Paul L. Archer/Navy)

WASHINGTON, D.C. — One of the U.S. Navy’s newest towing, rescue and salvage ships is being named the “[Cherokee Nation](#)” to honor the service and contributions the Cherokee people have made

to the Navy and Marine Corps.

Secretary of the Navy Richard Spencer announced Friday that [Gulf Island Shipyards](#) has been awarded a \$64.8 million contract to build the vessel, scheduled for completion by 2021.

- [Navy to christen new destroyer honoring Hawaii hero, statesman \[2019-06-19\]](#)

The late Sen. Daniel Inouye received the Medal of Honor for his battlefield bravery during World War II while serving with the mostly Japanese-American 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

By: The Associated Press

The Navy says the contract includes an option for six additional vessels, each to be named in honor of a prominent Native American or tribe.

Navy officials say it’s the fifth U.S. ship to be named in honor of the Cherokee people and the first since [a World War II-era tugboat](#) dubbed the Cherokee.



The tugboat Cherokee (AT-66) at anchor. (A gift of the U.S. Naval Institute Photo Collection, now in the collections of U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command)

Navy Times editor’s note: Based on existing commercial towing designs, Cherokee is being built to replace the Powhatan-class fleet ocean tugs (T-ATF 166) and the [two rescue and salvage ships](#) Grasp (Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea) and Salvor (Pacific Ocean) operated by U.S. Military Sealift Command. Cherokee Nation is the second vessel in

its class (T-ATS 7). Workers will build the vessel in Houma, Louisiana.

In his prepared remarks, Navy Secretary Spencer lauded the many Cherokee Nation citizens who’ve served in uniform and predicted that the new vessel “will expand our capabilities and form a critical backbone for the strength and readiness of the entire fleet.”



In 1966, South Carolina Cherokee Boatswain’s Mate 1st Class James E. Williams killed an unknown number of Viet Cong guerrillas while destroying 65 vessels and disrupting their logistic operation in South Vietnam’s Mekong Delta. Williams was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions during the three-hour battle. (U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command)

Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Bill John Baker praised the Navy for recognizing the generations of Cherokee men and women who “bravely and humbly sacrificed for our freedom today.”

“Our Cherokee people have contributed in every major battle and war ever fought in this country, and continue to serve in the armed forces in some of the highest rates per ethnicity. Cherokees are a strong, resilient people and we are privileged to have a U.S. ship at sea that reflects both our country and tribe’s history and values.”

The "quiet warrior": How a 95-year-old female veteran made history

By Caroline White

OnMilwaukee.com (Milwaukee, Wis.), June 15, 2019



Anna Mae Robertson, 95, has been called a "quiet warrior" for her service in the Women's Army Corps 6888th Central Directory Postal Battalion.

Editor's note: This story is part of an occasional Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service series that highlights groups and people worth knowing in Milwaukee. To nominate a person or a group, email info@milwaukeeenns.org and put "Spotlight" in the subject line.

Anna Mae Robertson once spent her time evading Nazi U-boats in war-torn Europe. Now, perched on her living room recliner with photos of her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren covering the walls, some may find it difficult to believe.

Robertson, 95 and a longtime Milwaukee resident, was a member of the only Women's Army Corps all-African American battalion that served overseas in World War II. The Women's Army Corps 6888th Central Directory Postal Battalion, or the "Six Triple Eight" as it's otherwise known, was sent to Europe in 1945 to sort a backlog of mail more than two years old.

"I remember all the jobs we did" and "the work we had to do to earn the jobs," Robertson said.

The women's efforts were celebrated and discussed in the documentary "The Six Triple Eight: No Mail, Low Morale." The film was shown in the Milwaukee County War Memorial Center earlier this month.

Robertson enlisted in the Army in March 1943, shortly after her mother died. She was 19 years old. After completing training at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, and Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, Robertson was ready for duty.

In February 1945, the "[Six Triple Eight](#)" set sail for Europe and were chased by German submarines along the way. The women were first sent to Birmingham, England.



The "Six Triple Eight," an African-American women's Army Corps that deployed to Europe to clear the postal system's backlog, worked to ensure the approximately 65,000 letters were sent to their final destinations. (PHOTO: U.S. Department of Defense)

They worked around the clock to ensure approximately 65,000 letters per eight-hour shift were sent to their final destinations.

The assignment was expected to take the group six months, but the women were able to complete it in half the time. The battalion's motto was "no mail, low morale."

The women endured more than their fair share of racism, sexism and challenging work environments, but that didn't slow them down. After leaving England, the Six Triple Eight moved on to Rouen, France, then finally to Paris, France.

"A lot of determination"

Robertson's daughter Sheree calls her mother "a quiet warrior."

"She's a reflection of a woman who's resilient, who has a lot of courage, a lot of determination and a woman who walks by her faith," she said.

<https://onmilwaukee.com/history/articles/nns-six-triple-eight-history.html>

Sheree said her mother didn't often talk about her military service. Instead she led her children by example, taking them with her to the open housing demonstrations held in Milwaukee in the 1960s. Sheree recalls marching with the Father James Groppi across the 16th Street viaduct with her mother and her siblings.

Robertson worked at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center as a nurse's aide. Along the way, she got married and had eight children. In December 1945, Robertson retired from military service.

She was visiting Milwaukee to attend the wedding of a fellow "Six Triple Eight" service member when she decided to stay.

Long overdue recognition

When members of the "Six Triple Eight" returned from overseas in 1945, they were not recognized for their work. It wasn't until 2014 that Robertson received her service medals. In 2018, a monument was dedicated to the 6888th Battalion in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

This year, the battalion finally received the Army Meritorious Unit Citation. In addition, Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) and Rep. Gwen Moore (D-Milwaukee) introduced bills to award the battalion a Congressional Gold Medal. Most recently, after the Milwaukee showing of the documentary, Robertson received a Certificate of Commendation from Gov. Tony Evers.

Edna Cummings, a veteran and producer of the documentary, said the women of the Six Triple Eight were courageous and inspiring.

"It's a narrative that's so compelling. It transcends race and gender. It's a lesson in leadership, resilience and an approach to getting the job done when the odds are stacked against you," Cummings said.

Wife of late Sen. Inouye christens warship bearing his name

By David Sharp

The Associated Press, June 22, 2019



Streamers shoot into the air after Irene Hirano Inouye, wife of the late Sen. Daniel Inouye of Hawaii, broke a bottle of Champagne on the bow of a warship bearing his name at Bath Iron Works on Saturday, June 22, in Bath, Maine. Her late husband, the ship's namesake, was a Medal of Honor recipient who broke racial barriers and represented Hawaii in the U.S. Senate for a half-century until his death in 2012. (AP Photo/David Sharp)

BATH, Maine (AP) — A Hawaiian delegation brought a tropical flair to a state known for cold weather as a U.S. Navy destroyer bearing the name of the late Sen. Daniel Inouye was christened Saturday at Bath Iron Works.

There were flowery leis around the necks of dignitaries and a giant one on the warship itself as Irene Hirano Inouye, the senator's wife and the ship's sponsor, smashed a bottle of Champagne on the bow of the future USS Daniel Inouye, which is under construction.

The Hawaiian touch was important, she said.

"The traditions of the Navy are very special and historic," she said before the ceremony. "But to truly make it reflect of Dan's life, and the people on Hawaii, our team had to find ways to bring a little bit of Hawaii to Maine."

Her late husband was a Medal of Honor recipient who broke racial barriers in Congress and represented Hawaii in the U.S. Senate as a Democrat for a half-century until his death in 2012. He lost his right arm in combat in World War II in Italy with the mostly Japanese American 442nd Regimental Combat Team. He died in 2012.

The ship's motto — "Go For Broke" — was borrowed from the 442nd.

U.S. Sen. Mazie Hirono, of Hawaii, thanked the ship's crew for "continuing in the tradition of Sen. Inouye's service to our country."

"To the crew, I wish you makani olu olu. I wish you all fair winds. Go for broke, as you serve the country on this incredible new ship," she told them.

In the Senate, Inouye served as chairman of the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee. Maine Sen. Susan Collins, a Republican who served with him, praised Inouye's valor, spirit and friendship.

Inouye visited Bath Iron Works in 1961, while serving in the U.S. House, for the launching of the USS Leahy, she noted. He was a strong supporter of naval sea power, she said.

Irene Hirano Inouye said her husband felt that a strong military is necessary to ensure peace.

"He was someone who saw the horrors of war firsthand," she told the crowd. "Dan always believed that the best way to avoid war to have the strongest military that we could."

Twenty-two protesters were arrested outside the christening on charges of obstructing a public way, police said. The demonstrators numbered about 50 and included members of Maine Veterans for Peace and the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space.

The Hawaiian tradition will continue when the Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer is commissioned into service; its homeport will be Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

Displaying more than 9,000 tons (8,165 metric tons), the 510-foot (155-meter) ship can easily top 30 knots while simultaneously waging war with enemy ships, submarines, missiles and aircraft.

Its combat system uses powerful computers and a phased-array radar to track more than 100 targets. It's also equipped with ballistic missile defense capability.

Miscellaneous

<https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/06/27/army-officer-suspended-for-confronting-japanese-americans-protesting-fort-sills-role-in-migrant-detention/>

Army officer suspended for confronting Japanese-Americans protesting Fort Sill's role in migrant detention

By Kyle Rempfer

Army Times, June 27, 2019



Satsuki Ina, 75, hangs origami cranes as part of the Tsuru for Solidarity protest of child detention at Fort Sill U.S. Army post, during a healing ceremony at Shepler Park in Lawton, Okla., on June 22, 2019. (Scott Rains/The Lawton Constitution via AP)

A military police officer was suspended this week following an exchange outside of [Fort Sill, Oklahoma](#), with [Japanese-American World War II internment camp](#) survivors who were protesting the upcoming use of the Army base as a temporary [housing facility for migrant children](#).

The MP, a lieutenant colonel, was filmed telling the protesters that they were not allowed to congregate outside the gate, yelling: “You need to move today — now!” and “What don’t you understand? It’s English: Get out.”

“The command has suspended the officer and has launched an investigation,” Maj. Gen. Wilson Shoffner, the commanding general of Fort Sill, said in a statement to Army Times. “Additionally, the command has put appropriate measures in place to respect one’s right to protest outside our installation.”

Fort Sill did not release the name of the suspended officer.

The demonstration itself was held in a park near the base, according to Satsuki Ina, who is with Tsuru for Solidarity, which helped organize the event. The group planned to also hold a press gaggle in front of Fort Sill’s gates as part of the demonstration.

“When we had the telephone conversation with the person from Fort Sill, they said you can have the press conference here but you can’t have the demonstration,” Ina told Army Times.

On the day of the event, they learned the permit for the press gaggle was denied as well, Ina said.

Demonstrating outside of the gates of military bases is not against the law, a Fort Sill spokesman said. “As long as they’re obeying the law, doing it peacefully, everybody’s entitled to that right,” they added.

“Special interest groups and individuals have a right to express an opinion and protest in accordance with local laws,” Shoffner said. “Our focus is to ensure the safety of our soldiers, families and civilians living and working on the installation. Coordination with local authorities will continue to ensure a combined awareness and community response.”

Ina said she didn’t want the military police officer to be punished, but hoped that his training would be updated to deal with sensitive situations.

“It would be very gratifying to know he’s going to get some training,” Ina, who spent her early childhood in an internment camp, said.

The interaction was concerning for her, because it “represented the kind of dehumanizing demeanor that we fear is what the children have to face and what we were confronted with when we were children during World War II.”

<https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/06/27/army-officer-suspended-for-confronting-japanese-americans-protesting-fort-sills-role-in-migrant-detention/>



The ACLU of Oklahoma observed the protests. (Nicole McAfee/ACLU)

Fort Sill was home to an internment camp for Japanese-Americans during the 1940s. The use of it to hold migrant children has sparked comparisons to that blemish on American history.

Tom Ikeda, executive director of Densho, an organization that preserves Japanese-American history, participated in the protest

Saturday.

“I know and respect that my rights as an American citizen come from the blood and lives of men and women who have placed themselves in harm’s way,” Ikeda said. “I also know I have the responsibility to speak up when I see innocent people, especially vulnerable children, harmed. This is why I went to Fort Sill to speak against the opening of another detention camp for refugee children.”

- [Up to 1,400 unaccompanied immigrant children could be coming to Fort Sill \[2019-06-11\]](#)

The ACLU of Oklahoma observed the protests. Nicole McAfee, a spokeswoman with the organization, said that they’re glad the base was ensuring personnel understand how to handle future protests as the federal government prepares to bring migrant children to facilities there.

“We hope that ... as 1,400 children are brought to the base, that everyone there will do their part to consider their words and actions and how those impact folks not only in front of cameras, but also behind the gates of Fort Sill,” McAfee said.

The soldier in the video “has since been ‘trained’” on how he should handle protesters in the future, the Fort Sill spokesman said.

“We do believe he behaved incorrectly,” the spokesman added. “That’s not the way we conduct business.”

Ikeda noted that Fort Sill served as a way-station for some Japanese-American soldiers during World War II.

“It is ironic that Japanese American soldiers received field artillery training at Fort Sill at the same time Fort Sill was an [internment camp for 700 Japanese immigrant men](#),” Ikeda said.

Those soldiers would eventually become part of the [442nd Regimental Combat Team](#), which served as a highly decorated, segregated Japanese-American combat unit in the European theater.

“I know this history well as a historian and the nephew of Staff Sergeant Francis Kinoshita, who was KIA from a German sniper bullet while fighting with the 442nd,” Ikeda said. “My uncle fought against fascism in Europe and for equality here in the United States even though he had to volunteer for military service from behind barbed wires and armed guards in an American concentration camp in Idaho.”

An executive order was signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt following the Dec. 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor attacks that commanded the relocation of more than 100,000 people, many American citizens, under the auspices of preventing espionage during the war.

The camps continued until the end of the conflict and primarily effected those of Japanese descent.

[Kyle Rempfer](#) is a senior reporter for Military Times. He previously served as an Air Force combat controller. Kyle's reporting focuses on U.S. Army leadership, recruiting, operations, training, personnel and funding.

Esper lays out priorities in first message to the force as acting SECDEF

By Meghann Myers

Military Times, June 24, 2019



Acting Defense Secretary Mark Esper is expected to be officially nominated for SECDEF later this year. (Lisa Ferdinando/DoD)

Still officially the Army secretary, [Acting Defense Secretary Mark Esper](#) finished out his first day on the job with a memo to the [Defense Department](#) on Monday.

At the top of his list are [lethality](#), a buzzword carried on from his predecessors, as well as building alliances and improving the department's efficiency, according to the letter.

“Since rejoining the Department nearly two years ago as the Secretary of the Army, my confidence in the incredible skill, professionalism, and commitment of our military and civilian workforce has grown even stronger,” Esper wrote.

The retired lieutenant colonel and former Raytheon executive's promotion was announced last week, after Acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan withdrew himself from consideration. The confirmed deputy secretary of defense, Shanahan had been filling in since early this year, after Defense Secretary Jim Mattis resigned.

However, in order for Esper to be officially confirmed, he will have to step down from this current role, per the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998. The law requires that someone being nominated for a job not currently be serving in an “acting” role, which would require a new acting SECDEF to take over while Esper awaited confirmation.

Shanahan served as part of a loophole, because he had previously been deputy SECDEF.

Esper was confirmed as Army secretary in December 2017, the third candidate the Trump administration put forward for the job. Trump said Friday that he plans to formally nominate Esper for the Pentagon's top job.

“The surest way to deter adversary aggression is to fully prepare for war,” Esper wrote in his memo, sticking closely to the National Defense Strategy the department laid out under Mattis' direction in 2018.

He also highlighted reform for “great performance and affordability,” an initiative he took head on while in charge of the Army, starting with a modernization overhaul codified with Army Futures Command.

In addition to acquisition reform, Esper made a name for himself with soldiers by tackling a litany of administrative requirements, from unmandated training to other check-the-block tasks — like killing the legendary weekend safety brief and the much derided PT belt.

- [The Army just killed the weekend safety brief for all soldiers \[2018-09-10\]](#)

“One of the complaints is we're doing all this mandatory training,” he told Army Times in early 2018. “And when you look at the numbers, it is astounding how much it has grown over the years.”

Esper has also spearheaded changes to the Army's enlistment requirements. Previously, a past of drug use or self-harm would ban a prospective soldier from joining, but he issued new guidance in 2019 that would allow a waiver if either occurred in early adolescence.

<https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2019/06/24/esper-lays-out-priorities-in-first-message-to-the-force-as-acting-secdef/>

“You know, drug use or bad hearing, flat feet, eczema. I mean, all these things that tend to be disqualifiers,” he told Army Times in September. “I think we need to take a look at all those standards and make sure it’s still relevant for this day and age.”

And, at a time when the Pentagon hasn’t had an on-camera briefing from a senior official in over a year, Esper began quarterly, open-ended round tables with reporters.

In May, he encouraged Army public affairs to move more quickly and engage more with reporters, in the face of a reputation for slow responses and micromanaged statements.

“That has to change. Delays breed suspicious, which inevitably takes the form of skepticism, which often all but guarantees a negative spin to whatever we put out,” Esper said.

Public affairs professionals should engage the media constantly, he added, as should their commanders.

“In minor ways, I’d rather see us make mistakes than be perpetually behind the curve, or lose that trust with the media,” he said.

A timeline for Esper’s nomination and confirmation hearing has not been released, but he could officially take over the Pentagon as early as the end of July.

[Meghann Myers](#) is the Pentagon bureau chief at Military Times. She covers operations, policy, personnel, leadership and other issues affecting service members.

High court upholds precedents on deference to agencies

By Jessica Gresko

The Associated Press, June 26, 2019

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Wednesday rejected a conservative push to limit the power of federal agencies.

The high court declined to overrule two past cases that had been criticized by conservatives as giving unelected officials vast lawmaking power. But the way the justices clarified the older rulings led one justice to suggest that while the cases hadn't been overruled they'd been left "on life support."

Chief Justice John Roberts broke with his more conservative colleagues and joined the court's four liberal justices in refusing to overrule the earlier cases. The court's other conservatives were ready to, in the words of Justice Neil Gorsuch, "say goodbye" to the decisions.

The issue of overturning precedents is front and center during this term of the court as observers are watching to see how far and how fast a newly more conservative court is willing to go in its decisions. The court's [ruling](#) was something of a surprise because when the court takes a case with the specific purpose of reconsidering whether to overrule a past decision it is generally a signal it is ready to do so.

The case the court was considering has to do with how courts should respond when an agency — such as the Transportation Security Administration or Mine Safety and Health Administration — writes a regulation that is ambiguous. Previous cases said judges should defer to an agency's interpretation of its own ambiguous regulation if the interpretation is reasonable.

Justice Elena Kagan wrote that the approach makes sense: "Want to know what a rule means? Ask its author."

Kagan, writing for a majority of the court, reiterated that an agency has "significant leeway to say what its own rules mean." But she also explained the limits of when deference applies, noting among other things that the agency's reading must still be reasonable and deference shouldn't apply unless the regulation is genuinely ambiguous.

Conservatives have criticized the Supreme Court's deference decisions for some time. Before his death three years ago Justice Antonin Scalia, who himself wrote the unanimous 1997 *Auer v. Robbins* decision the court was being asked to overrule, said it should be abandoned. Some of his conservative colleagues similarly questioned the decision and one from 1945 that preceded it, *Bowles v. Seminole Rock & Sand Co.*

Gorsuch wrote for himself and three fellow conservatives that it should have been easy for the justices to "say goodbye to *Auer v. Robbins*." Instead, he said his colleagues left it on "life support." He said the "new and nebulous qualifications and limitations" that his colleagues in the majority imposed mean the doctrine of agency deference "emerges maimed and enfeebled — in truth, zombified."

The specific case before the justices involved Vietnam veteran James Kisor. Kisor has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and has tangled with the Department of Veterans Affairs over disability benefits. Kisor said he should get benefits back to the 1980s while the VA, interpreting its own regulation, disagreed, saying he should only get benefits back to 2006. The justices sent Kisor's case back to a lower court to be reviewed in light of the court's decision.

The case is 18-15, *Kisor v. Wilkie*.

It'll be tight, but the Army expects to meet recruiting goals this year

By Kyle Rempfer

Army Times, June 25, 2019



Acting Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy expects to meet the service's recruiting goals. (Staff Sgt. Shawn Weismiller/Air Force)

After last year's recruiting shortfall, the Army's acting secretary is hopeful that the service will meet its goals for 2019.

The Army has been having trouble meeting its recruiting requirements as it strives to grow to a [500,000-strong active-duty force](#) by the end of the next decade.

Last year, the service planned to grow the active force to 487,500, but it ended 2019 with 478,000 troops due to recruiting and retention issues.

"It's a difficult market because it's a very healthy job market," said Acting Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy during a roundtable with reporters Tuesday. "This environment is as challenging as we've faced — 3.6 percent unemployment. We have no benchmark historically for the all-volunteer force."

The old plan was to grow the force by 4,000 troops per year to make the 500,000 goal. Now, senior leaders are looking at [2,000 additional troops](#) per year as the target.

"We are on target, but it's close," McCarthy said. "We, statistically, can make it, but we're going to have to run through the finish line — undoubtedly a full sprint."

McCarthy said various Army officials have been visiting cities all over the country to meet with local civic leaders and help build the relationships necessary to expose the service to potential recruits.

A booming job market and historically low unemployment remain key issues for recruiting efforts.

"That's coupled with all the other factors we talk about all the time: obesity, mental health, challenges with law enforcement," McCarthy said. "Things of that nature that would require waivers."

Unlike past recruiting boons, such as the surge years during the Iraq War, the Army has not been offering more waivers to meet demands.

McCarthy said that the Army was "staying flat" on the number of waivers it's issuing.

"We are not going near quality," he said.

McCarthy will be traveling next week and spending most of his time at Army Recruiting Command at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

While there, he plans to talk to the trainers and NCOs going through the recruiting schoolhouse about the mentality that recruiters need to have.

"You got to engage kids," McCarthy said. "It's the mentality that a recruiter needs to have to get someone to understand their story — why an opportunity to serve in the U.S. Army would be a great thing."

"It's the lifeblood of our business and it's something, in particular in the last six months, I've tried to invest more of my time because the first 18 [months] has been predominately modernization and the budget," he added.

Lawmakers introduce bill to rescind 20 Medals of Honor issued in connection with a massacre of Native Americans

By Brian Mackley

Military Times, June 25, 2019



Lawmakers introduced a bill calling for the rescinding of 20 Medals of Honor awarded for what became known as the Wounded Knee Massacre that killed more than 200 Lakota Sioux. (Photo by Brian Mackley)

On a day the first Medal of Honor was bestowed on a living Iraq War recipient, lawmakers and members of the Sioux nation announced their plan to take away those awarded for what became known as The Wounded Knee Massacre.

The Remove the Stain Act was introduced Tuesday by U.S. Reps. Denny Heck (D-Washington), Deb Haaland (D-New Mexico), and Paul Cook (R-California). It was named for [the U.S. military's massacre of more than 200 Lakota Indians, confined to a camp near Wounded Knee Creek](#), South Dakota, on Dec. 29, 1890.

Eventually, 20 men were awarded the military's highest honor for that engagement and the bill seeks to address what proponents call an historic wrong.



U.S. Rep. Paul Cook (R_California) speaks in support of the Remove the Stain Act. (Photo by Brian Mackley)

“I believe the introduction of this bill today shows the continued work and strength of the Native American people who have fought for over a century for the United States to acknowledge the genocide of our people that has taken place on this soil.” Haaland said.

“We are here today because we revere the Congressional Medal of Honor,” Heck said.

Proponents say that although the United States is 129 years late they believe that this bill can help heal some of the wounds from the massacre and honor all the other Medal of Honor recipients who earned their honors in combat, not genocide.

Cook knows something about combat. A retired Marine colonel, he was awarded a Bronze Star Medal with "V" device and two Purple Hearts.



Photos that were shared at the conference. (Photo by Brian Mackley)

“I join in this because we are remembering the past and correcting something that was tragic in all ways,” Cook said. “And to make it even more so was awarding those particular medals for such a horrible, horrible event.”

Heck acknowledged that he and other supporters are in for a fight.

“One of the burdens that I think especially that Congressman Cook and I hear is helping some of our non-Native American colleagues understand the depth of pain that this causes,” Heck said.

<https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2019/06/25/lawmakers-introduce-bill-to-rescind-20-medals-of-honor-issued-in-connection-with-a-massacre-of-native-americans/>



Marcella LeBeau a WWII veteran and Native American, shares her experiences. (Photo by Brian Mackley)

After the politicians made their opening remarks, Native Americans shared photos and accounts of what happened to their ancestors, many of whom were direct descendants of those killed at Wounded Knee.

Some, like Marcella LeBeau, are veterans.

LeBeau served in WWII, as a first lieutenant in the Army Nurse Corps. She earned [The French Legion of Honor](#).

She said she has been fighting for justice for her people most of her life.

“They took the lives of innocent women and children and (Lakota Sioux Chief) Big Foot as he laid there suffering from pneumonia, unable to help himself,” LeBeau said. “So we are here today to ask that you remove those Medals of Honor.”



An emotional ending as Congresswoman Haaland receives her Native American name and awards. (Photo by Brian Mackley)

LeBeau also talked being bombarded during WWII and what it was like inside her hospital’s trauma room. She also shared some experiences of her ancestors and talked about the need for healing. She finished with a prayer she said on Omaha beach during D-Day’s 60th anniversary.

“I had the opportunity to serve as a nurse in WWII. It was one of the greatest honors and privileges in my life,” LeBeau said.

Supreme Court allows partisan districts, blocks census query

By Mark Sherman

The Associated Press, June 27, 2019



In this June 20, 2019 file photo, the Supreme Court is seen under stormy skies in Washington. Two issues that could determine the distribution of political power for the next decade await resolution on the Supreme Court's final day of decisions before a long summer break. Chief Justice John Roberts could well be the author of decisions on both politically charged topics Thursday, June 27, whether to allow a citizenship question on the 2020 census and place limits on drawing electoral districts for partisan gain. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite, File)

WASHINGTON (AP) — In two politically charged rulings, the Supreme Court dealt a huge blow Thursday to efforts to combat the drawing of electoral districts for partisan gain and put a hold on the Trump administration's effort to add a citizenship question to the 2020 census.

On the court's final day of decisions before a summer break, the conservative justices ruled that federal courts have no role to play in the dispute over the practice known as partisan gerrymandering. The decision could embolden political line-drawing for partisan gain when state lawmakers undertake the next round of redistricting following the 2020 census.

Voters and elected officials should be the arbiters of what is a political dispute, Chief Justice John Roberts said in his opinion for the court.

The court rejected challenges to Republican-drawn congressional districts in North Carolina and a Democratic district in Maryland.

The decision was a major blow to critics of the partisan manipulation of electoral maps that can result when one party controls redistricting.

The districting plans "are highly partisan by any measure," Roberts said.

But he said courts are the wrong place to settle these disputes.

In dissent for the four liberals, Justice Elena Kagan wrote, "For the first time ever, this court refuses to remedy a constitutional violation because it thinks the task beyond judicial capabilities." Kagan, in mournful tones, read a summary of her dissent in court to emphasize her disagreement.

Federal courts in five states concluded that redistricting plans put in place under one party's control could go too far and that there were ways to identify and manage excessively partisan districts. Those courts included 15 federal judges appointed by Republican and Democratic presidents reaching back to Jimmy Carter.

But the five Republican-appointed justices decided otherwise.

The decision effectively reverses the outcome of rulings in Maryland, Michigan, North Carolina and Ohio, where courts had ordered new maps drawn, and ends proceedings in Wisconsin, where a retrial was supposed to take place this summer after the Supreme Court last year threw out a decision on procedural grounds.

Proponents of limiting partisan gerrymandering still have several routes open to them, including challenges in state courts. There is a pending North Carolina lawsuit.

<https://apnews.com/4156cf044e314b5bb9f2d0a99f4bc2b2>

The North Carolina case has its roots in court decisions striking down some of the state's congressional districts because they were illegal racial gerrymanders.

When lawmakers drew new maps as a result, Republicans who controlled the legislature sought to perpetuate the 10-3 GOP advantage in the congressional delegation. Democratic voters sued over the new districts, complaining that they were driven by partisan concerns.

The voters won a lower court ruling, as did Democrats in Wisconsin who challenged state assembly districts. But when the Supreme Court threw out the Wisconsin ruling on procedural grounds that did not address the partisan gerrymandering claims, the justices also ordered a new look at the North Carolina case. A three-judge court largely reinstated its ruling.

In Maryland, Democrats controlled redistricting and sought to flip one district that had been represented by a Republican for 20 years. Their plan succeeded, and a lower court concluded that the district violated the Constitution.

The high court agreed to hear both cases.

In the census case, the court said the Trump administration's explanation for wanting to add the question was "more of a distraction" than an explanation. The administration had cited the need to improve enforcement of the Voting Rights Act.

There was no immediate response from the White House on either Supreme Court decision Thursday.

It's unclear whether the administration would have time to provide a fuller account. Census forms are supposed to be printed beginning next week.

Roberts again had the court's opinion, with the four liberals joining him in the relevant part of the outcome.

A lower court found the administration violated federal law in the way it tried to add a question broadly asking about citizenship for the first time since 1950.

The Census Bureau's own experts have predicted that millions of Hispanics and immigrants would go uncounted if the census asked everyone if he or she is an American citizen.

Immigrant advocacy organizations and Democratic-led states, cities and counties argue the citizenship question is intended to discourage the participation of minorities, primarily Hispanics, who tend to support Democrats, from filling out census forms.

The challengers say they would get less federal money and fewer seats in Congress if the census asks about citizenship because people with noncitizens in their households would be less likely to fill out their census forms.

Evidence uncovered since the Supreme Court heard arguments in the case in late April supports claims that the citizenship question is part of a broader Republican effort to accrue political power at the expense of minorities, the challengers say.

The Constitution requires a census count every 10 years. A question about citizenship had once been common, but it has not been widely asked since 1950. At the moment, the question is part of a detailed annual sample of a small chunk of the population, the American Community Survey.

The case stems from Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross' decision in 2018 to add a citizenship question to the next census, over the advice of career officials at the Census Bureau, which is part of the Commerce Department. At the time, Ross said he was responding to a Justice Department request to ask about citizenship in order to improve enforcement of the federal Voting Rights Act.

Veterans with PTSD twice as likely to die from suicide, accidents, study says

By Tauren Dyson

UPI, June 24, 2019



Many Marines return to the states with vivid memories of their combat experiences, and the array of emotions they face internally may be hard to detect. Photo courtesy of The Marines/Flickr

June 24 (UPI) -- For many veterans, life in combat is hard, but for those who survive it, the mental stress of war can be deadly, new research shows.

Veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder have twice the risk of dying from accidental injury, viral hepatitis and suicide compared to the general population, according to a [study published](#) Monday in the American Journal of Preventative Medicine. They also have a higher risk of developing chronic liver disease and diabetes.

"Our findings suggest that treatment-seeking veterans with PTSD, including young veterans and women, are dying from largely preventable causes compared with the general population," Jenna A. Forehand, a researcher at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center and study lead investigator, said in a news release.

The retrospective cohort study included more than 490,000 veterans undergoing treatment for PTSD at various Veterans Affairs Medical Centers between 2008 and 2013. During that time, more than 5,200 veterans, at an average age of 48.5, died during their first year of care. About 90 percent of them were males, 63.5 percent were white and nearly 35 percent were deployed in [Afghanistan](#) or Iraq.

- RELATED [Biological marker may indicate PTSD patients at risk for suicide](#)

In the first year of care, younger veterans with PTSD were at risk for suicide and accidental injury from poisoning, while older veterans were likely to die from heart disease or malignant tumors.

In all, 1.1 percent of veterans in the study died a year after starting treatment, representing a 5 percent higher rate than the general population.

Veterans may turn to opioid use to deal with comorbid pain from lingering combat injuries, pain disorders and PTSD sustained in combat. This misuse of opioids, the researchers say, may lead to suicides, accidental injuries and hepatitis-related deaths, particularly among younger veterans.

- RELATED [Exposure therapy more effective for PTSD with drinking problems](#)

"Future studies should develop preventative interventions that target PTSD and comorbid depression, pain disorder and substance use to lessen the risk of suicide, accidental poisoning and viral hepatitis in veterans with PTSD," Forehand said. "Similarly, lifestyle modifications may reduce the risk of diabetes and chronic liver disease in this patient population. Veterans seeking treatment for PTSD should receive comprehensive education on the benefits of diet and exercise and the risks of chronic stress and substance use."

- RELATED [Veterans with PTSD have stronger bonds with service dogs than average person, study says](#)

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With resilience and grit, this wounded sailor made it back to the fleet — and earned eight gold medals

By Geoff Ziezulewicz

Navy Times, June 25, 2019



U.S. Navy Master Chief Petty Officer Raina Hockenberry trains for the DoD Warrior Games rowing competition, May 29, 2018. The Warrior Games are an annual event, established in 2010, to introduce wounded, ill and injured service members to adaptive sports as a way to enhance their recovery and rehabilitation. (DoD photo by Staff Sgt. Carlin Leslie)

No one would've held it against Master Chief Raina Hockenberry if she took off her anchors and just went home after the events of Aug.

5, 2014.

The personnel specialist was a senior chief halfway through a deployment to Afghanistan, where her mission was to help train the Afghan security forces.

She was with a group of Americans leaving an Afghan military camp in Kabul when a rogue Afghan gunman opened fire on them, wounding the 41-year-old in her tibia, groin and stomach.

The Navy was ready to medically retire her, but Hockenberry couldn't bear the thought of leaving the Navy.

"I love being a chief," she said. "Having the privilege to lead sailors every day. I'm so honored to do that."

Back at Walter Reed medical center during her recovery, she asked for a laptop so she could get back to work.

"My identity was Senior Chief Hockenberry," she said. "Being in the hospital, you're a patient and you lose who you are. That laptop was huge. It gave me my identity back. It gave me something to focus on. I was useful again."

Hockenberry will be honored as the Sailor of the Year at the annual Service Members of the Year Award [ceremony](#) in Washington, D.C., on July 10.

She credits junior enlisted service members at Walter Reed for helping her to keep fighting to return to the fleet, even on days when she just wanted to go home and sit on the couch.

"Every time I wanted to quit, there always seemed to be some junior sailor popping in saying, 'Hey senior, you going to PT?'" Hockenberry recalled.

"And I said, 'Of course I am!' Because that's what we do. What chiefs do."

Today, she serves on board the Hawaii-based guided-missile cruiser Port Royal. As of mid-June, she was planning to take part, for the second year, in the Warrior Games, an athletic competition that brings wounded, sick, and injured U.S. troops together across a variety of events.

She won eight gold medals and set four swimming records last year. She also traveled to Sydney, Australia, to take part in the Invictus Games.

Being among others who have suffered similar injuries helps her let down the master chief invincibility shield.

<https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2019/06/25/with-resilience-and-grit-this-wounded-sailor-made-it-back-to-the-fleet-and-earned-eight-gold-medals/>

“At the end of a 12-hour day on my ship, it doesn’t matter how much my leg is aching and how tired I am,” she said. “I’ll be damned if I limp. (But at the games) after a four-hour bike ride, I have no problem walking real slow. It’s okay.”

These days, she’s happy to be back in the fleet working alongside her shipmates.

“Today, I’m just another sailor,” Hockenberry said. “Granted, I’m a master chief and that’s awesome, but I do drill, I do general quarters, I’m up and down ladder wells. I do what every other sailor does.”

When Hockenberry decided to stay in the Navy, she started actively seeking out a new assignment. “I went shopping,” she recalled, contacting various commands and asking “Would you take me?”

Eventually, the Port Royal’s skipper, Capt. Christopher Budde, brought her on.

While Hockenberry admits she’s not one to glom on to the spotlight, she hopes her story “might help someone that’s sitting in a dark place.”

“On the flip side, it might convince another commanding officer to take a sailor who’s injured,” she said.

Everyone who sustains a life-changing injury needs to find the one thing that will motivate them.

For Hockenberry, that’s been Navy life.

“You’ve got to fight for what you want,” she said. “If you really want it, there’s so many in the Navy who will help you, you just have to ask.”

“And there’s a lot of us, especially senior leaders, who don’t ask.”

“As senior enlisted leaders, we think we’re invincible and untouchable,” she said.

“You don’t have to be perfect. I don’t walk perfect, I sure don’t swim perfect. But that’s okay.”

“I think that was the hardest thing for me to accept.”

Just more than two years after the attack that changed her life, Hockenberry returned to Afghanistan as part of “Operation Proper Exit,” a program that brings wounded troops back to the places where they were injured.

“When you’re medevacked out, you just pick up and leave — there’s no closure,” Hockenberry said. “This gives those injured troops closure.”

Hockenberry was just starting to walk again and her rehab had begun to feel like it would never end by the time she took the trip.

“When you’re in that cycle, you don’t think there’s an end,” she said. “The four gentlemen I went with have all been through the gamut and now have productive lives. It’s just an injury. It’s not your life.”

Misconduct

Air Force Investigating Airman After Homophobic Rant on YouTube

By Oriana Pawlyk

Military.com, June 26, 2019



Airmen walk toward a C-17 Globemaster III aircraft on the flightline, June 1, 2019. (Andre Trinidad/Air Force)

The [Air Force](#) is investigating an airman after he posted a video on YouTube rife with homophobic slurs and insults.

A man in an Air Force uniform, identified only by the YouTube username "Baptist Dave 1611" ranted in a recent video, calling gay people "sodomites," "vermin scum," and "roaches" among other slurs, according to [Air Force Times](#), which first reported the story

Wednesday.

"The specifics of the situation are being reviewed by the airman's command team," said service spokesman Maj Nick Mercurio, confirming the incident. Mercurio did not provide any identifying details about the airman.

A screenshot from the video posted on Air Force Times showed the airman in his Airman Battle Uniform. The account has since been removed from the website.

"When you get these perverts on their own, they flee like cockroaches, like the roaches they are, the vermin scum, the pedophiles that they are," the airman said in the video, as reported by Air Force Times.

In the video, "Baptist Dave" also said he was influenced by Grayson Fritts, the Tennessee Knox County Sheriff's Office detective [who recently advocated](#) for the arrest and execution of LGBTQ people. Fritts is also a pastor of All Scripture Baptist Church in Knoxville. During a sermon on June 2, Fritts said LGBTQ individuals "are worthy of death." The video, originally released by the church, went viral on social media.

The Air Force on Wednesday stressed inclusivity.

"The Air Force considers diversity to be one of our greatest assets," Mercurio said in a statement to Military.com. "Therefore, airmen are expected to treat one another with dignity and respect. We do not tolerate behavior that is contrary to those values."

Mercurio cited Air Force Instruction 1-1 which outlines the service's culture standards that all airmen must comply with.

"Our core values demand that Airmen treat others with genuine dignity, fairness, and respect at all times," the AFI states under its code of conduct.

"Each Airman is entitled to fair, scrupulous, and unbiased treatment, and each Airman has the obligation to care for, teach, and lead others. We must also maintain loyalty to the Air Force's core values and standards and maintain professionalism and respect for others regardless of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, or sexual orientation. This respect for others not only involves personal interaction, but also extends to communications and interactions in social media and cyberspace," it says.

Last year, the Pentagon [introduced a new policy to deter misconduct](#) and harassment among servicemembers, defining harassment to include offensive jokes, stereotyping, violence, and discrimination.

Under direction from then-Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, the Defense Department in February unveiled DoD Instruction 1020.03, Harassment Prevention And Response in the Armed Forces, which immediately

<https://www.military.com/daily-news/2019/06/26/air-force-investigating-airman-after-homophobic-rant-youtube.html>

superseded any past department policies on sexual harassment and unacceptable behavior for service members.

The [23-page comprehensive policy](#) updates the department's definitions of harassment and proper response to attacks on individuals via social media, as well as misconduct on [bases](#).

DoD says that harassment may include "offensive jokes, epithets, ridicule or mockery, insults or put-downs, displays of offensive objects or imagery, stereotyping, intimidating acts, veiled threats of violence, threatening or provoking remarks, racial or other slurs, derogatory remarks about a person's accent, or displays of racially offensive symbols."

Discriminatory harassment -- which is based on race, color, religion, sex (including gender identity), national origin, or sexual orientation -- is addressed under the policy.

The reported YouTube video marks the latest in a string of incidents under investigation by the Air Force involving alleged inappropriate conduct by airmen.

In April, the service said it was looking into Master Sgt. Cory Reeves of the 50th Space Wing at [Schriever Air Force Base](#) Colorado after the group Colorado Springs Anti-Fascists accused Reeves of being a member of white nationalist organization Identity Evropa in an online post.

Weeks earlier, the Office of Special Investigations at the 39th Air Base Wing at [Incirlik Air Base](#), Turkey, [began investigating Airman First Class Dannion Phillips](#), who was identified in a Huffington Post report as being involved with Identity Evropa.

The Air Force did not have additional information on the status of these investigations by press time.

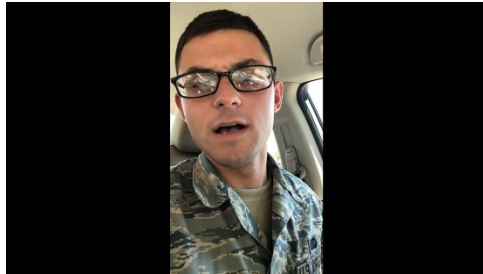
-- Oriana Pawlyk can be reached at oriana.pawlyk@military.com. Follow her on Twitter at @oriana0214.

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Air Force investigating homophobic videos from airman in uniform

By Stephen Losey

Air Force Times, June 26, 2019



An unidentified airman posted a video expressing support for a controversial pastor who called for the government to execute gay people. In the 11-minute video he called gay people various slurs, including "vermin." In a second video, which also shows the airman in uniform, he denounced Islam, the Mormon Church and Roman Catholicism. (Screenshot from YouTube)

The Air Force is investigating an airman who last week [posted videos of himself](#), in uniform, denouncing [gay people](#) as "sodomites," "pedophiles," "roaches" and "vermin scum," among other slurs.

The unidentified airman, who posted videos on YouTube under the name "Baptist Dave 1611" before taking down his account over the weekend, also voiced support for Grayson Fritts, a controversial Baptist pastor in Knoxville, Tennessee, and his views supporting the execution of [gay people](#) in the nearly 11-minute video.

"The sodomites, the homos, they do all their filthy acts in the dark of night where no one can see them," the airman said. "When you get these perverts on their own, they flee like cockroaches, like the roaches they are, the vermin scum, the pedophiles that they are."

Fritts, who is a Knox County sheriff's detective, recently came under heavy criticism after advocating for the government to arrest, try and execute homosexual people in a sermon, arguing that the Bible calls for such punishments. Fritts is now on sick leave and will leave law enforcement next month as part of a buyout, the Knoxville News Sentinel reported.

- [Air Force Reserve taking action after recruit's 'detestable' racial slur video \[2018-06-12\]](#)

The airman also posted another video, titled "Who I Hate," in which he denounced Islam, the Mormon Church and Roman Catholicism as cults.

Air Force spokeswoman Ann Stefanek confirmed the man in the videos is an airman, but would not provide his name, location, or say whether he is an officer or enlisted due to privacy issues.

"The specifics of the situation are being reviewed by the airman's command team," Stefanek said in an email Tuesday. "The Air Force considers diversity to be one of our greatest assets; therefore, every airman is expected to treat each other with dignity and respect. We do not tolerate behavior that is contrary to those values."

Stefanek also highlighted an excerpt from Air Force Instruction 1-1, which requires "airmen treat others with genuine dignity, fairness and respect at all times."

AFI 1-1 also requires airmen to "maintain professionalism and respect for others regardless of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, or sexual orientation."

"This respect for others not only involves personal interaction, but also extends to communications and interactions in social media and cyberspace," the regulation reads.

His video supporting Fritts, which was posted June 19, also claims many Christians agree with Fritts, but are too afraid that what he termed the "homo mafia" will destroy their livelihoods.

<https://www.airforcetimes.com/news/your-air-force/2019/06/26/air-force-investigating-homophobic-videos-from-airman-in-uniform/>

He also denounced parents who take their children to “drag queen story hour” events, claiming children are sexualized there, and claims some parents force sons to cross-dress and dance at gay bars.

“If you’re making your son, for example, dress up as a woman and go dance at a sodomite bar, that’s hip, that’s cool, that’s trendy,” the airman said. “But if you just believe the Bible, and you take your kid to church, that’s child abuse, right?”

His “Who I Hate” video, which was also posted June 19 and in which he also wears his Air Force uniform, contains a section where he called Mormon missionaries “ministers of Satan” for preaching what he views as a false religion. He called Islam a “violent, barbaric, pedophilic cult” created by Satan.

The airman also said he hates the Pope and other Catholic clergy for their role in the Catholic Church’s widespread sex abuse scandals.

A third video, in which the airman does not appear to be wearing his uniform, criticized the Cracker Barrel restaurant for refusing to serve Fritts due to the controversy over his anti-gay sermon. All of his videos have now been removed from YouTube.

The Modern Military Association of America, a nonprofit organization that advocates for LGBT service members and veterans, issued a release Friday calling on the Air Force to hold the airman accountable for his actions.

“This alarming call for the execution of LGBTQ people by a service member in uniform no doubt adds fuel to the fire of those who wish us harm,” MMAA Executive Director Andy Blevins, who served in the Navy, said in the release. “What this airman did is blatantly illegal under the [Uniform Code of Military Justice], and he has disrespected his uniform, the United States Air Force, and the military as a whole. The dangerous message this hate speech sends to those he serves with, including service members who may be LGBTQ, is completely unacceptable and could have severe consequences.”

In another incident, the Air Force Reserve last year kicked out a recent recruit who appeared in a racist video that went viral. The former recruit denied she was racist, and said that she was drunk in the video.

[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.

Here's what the investigation into a fired Marine Corps CO found

By Geoff Ziezulewicz

Navy Times, June 21, 2019



Marine Corps Lt. Col. Christopher N. Kinsey (Marine Corps)

The top officer of a Marine Corps aviation unit [was canned in April](#) after an investigator ruled that he fraternized with and sexually harassed a married sergeant, according to a command investigation obtained by Military Times.

Lt. Col. Christopher Kinsey had commanded the [Center of Naval Aviation Technical Training-Marine Unit New River](#) in North Carolina since 2017. [Naval Education and Training Command](#) announced his relief last month.

The name of the female sergeant who allegedly was subjected to Kinsey's anytime text messages and invites to go swimming was redacted in the report released in response to a Freedom of Information Act request.

Also cloaked were the investigating officer's recommendations, aside from one "that the allegation of sexual harassment be substantiated."

"The definition of sexual harassment is met by the facts revealed in this investigation," the report states.

The alleged misdeeds occurred in February, after the woman arrived at the command and developed what the investigation determined was a good reputation among her colleagues, according to the investigation completed by Marine Corps Installations East-Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune.

"LtCol Kinsey made repeated unwelcome verbal comments and gestures of a sexual nature during face-to-face interactions...that negatively affected her emotional and psychological welfare and interfered with her work performance," the investigator wrote.

- [CO of aviation training unit canned \[2019-04-18\]](#)

Kinsey could not be independently reached for comment and his civilian attorney, Eric Kopka, did not return calls seeking comment.

In a written March statement, Kinsey insisted he had never sexually harassed the sergeant or any other Marine during his 28-year career.

"I maintain an open door policy for all of my Marines, regardless of rank, and I believe in intrusive leadership, knowing who my Marines are, interacting with them on a daily basis, and remaining available to them for guidance whether it is in person or through electronic communications," he wrote.

Staff members describe Kinsey as "very personable" and told the investigator that he "interacts with nearly everyone in the command."

Marine Corps spokesman Nathaniel Fahy said Thursday that any further disciplinary action against Kinsey "Is still pending adjudication and currently under the cognizance of the commander, Marine Corps Installations Command."

Both Kinsey and the sergeant are married but live apart from their spouses, according to the probe.

The investigator chides Kinsey for his "casual and friendly text messages" with the Marine during the day, night and weekends.

<https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2019/06/21/heres-what-the-investigation-into-a-fired-marine-corps-co-found/>

“These are inappropriate communications between a commanding officer and a (Marine) within his chain-of-command,” the report states.

The sergeant was “enamored and attracted to her Commanding Officer, LtCol Kinsey, with an aspiration to gain his attention and approval,” the report states.

- [Assault, fraternization, harassment: Unit punishment book reveals noncommissioned officer misconduct aboard 13th MEU deployment \[2019-05-30\]](#)

The investigators characterized the days between Feb. 9 and Feb. 18 as a period of fraternization, but from the 19th to the 25th of that month Kinsey’s “reckless conduct” grew to include “unwelcome sexual advances.”

Kinsey spoke of meritoriously advancing the Marine, and while he “did not explicitly communicate acceptance of his subtle sexual advances as a condition of career (advancement), he had implicitly done so on multiple occasions by voicing comments concerning his intention to meritoriously promote (the Marine),” the report states.

He gave the sergeant a lift on Feb. 19 and told her she was “testing his moral compass” while looking at her “as if she was an ‘object on display,’” the investigator wrote.

The two went swimming at the base later that day, and again Kinsey told the sergeant repeated that she was testing his moral compass, according to the report.

He also “moved closer to her in the pool and suggested that they sink to the bottom of the pool so she can give him a hug,” the report states.

Kinsey denied this and other allegations in an interview with the investigator, according to the report.

Kinsey winked at her during a graduation ceremony the following day and selected her for a position that would bring her closer to his office “for personal reasons,” the investigator wrote.

The sergeant’s immediate chain noticed a difference in the woman’s disposition along the way.

On Feb. 25, she went to his office and he told her she should change his name in her phone to “something sexy,” according to the report.

She didn’t have her swimsuit that day, so Kinsey asked if she was wearing a sports bra and “threw a pair of his PT shorts in her lap,” insisting “that she then has what she needs to swim with him that afternoon,” the report states.

“I always have extra PT shorts and would lend my PT gear to other Marines if they need it,” he told the investigator.

While the sergeant grew uncomfortable with texting her CO every day, she didn’t show it in the texts, according to the report.

“However, her statement clearly articulated her apprehension toward LtCol Kinsey,” the investigator wrote. “Other family members were also informed of her worries.”

On Feb. 13, during swim talk, Kinsey texted “I can help you with some techniques,” and she told him he looked younger than another Marine whose name is redacted.

- [Marines who flew T-34C sky penis pattern didn’t know new transponder allowed everyday civilians to track their flight path \[2019-05-22\]](#)

At one point, the sergeant texted Kinsey late after she had been drinking to say she hoped he was having a good night.

<https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2019/06/21/heres-what-the-investigation-into-a-fired-marine-corps-co-found/>

Kinsey told the investigating officer that he regularly texted with other Marines about meals and exercise, according to the report.

When the investigator asked whether Kinsey typically sends “late evening text(s)” to his NCOs, Kinsey told her that “nutrition is a topic that I routinely discuss with others.”

The investigator showed Kinsey a text he sent to the sergeant at one point that read “hope ur day was amazing” and had a heart emoji at the end.

“I showed LtCol Kinsey the text and he was surprised to see it and denied sending the emoji,” the investigator wrote.

[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.

Homeland Security Employees Aren't Disciplined Consistently for Misconduct

Lengthy survey by watchdog faults vague definitions, poor record-keeping for the lack of standard consequences across agencies within the department.

By Charles S. Clark

Government Executive, June 20, 2019



By Tero Vesalainen / Shutterstock.com

Misconduct at the varied agencies within the massive Homeland Security Department—from [sexual harassment](#) to discrimination, to absences without leave, to credit card fraud to sleeping on the job—is not being addressed consistently, according to results of a large-scale employee survey released earlier this week.

The policy of the department created by merging 22 agencies following the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks “does not include procedures for reporting allegations of misconduct, clear and specific supervisor roles and expectations, or clearly defined key discipline terms,” said the [report](#) from acting DHS Inspector General Jennifer Costello.

The department also lacks “data monitoring and metrics to gauge program performance,” the report said. It analyzed an online survey that went out to 192,495 employees in 2017 and garnered 54,108 responses.

“These deficiencies occurred because DHS’ Employee Relations office has limited staff, who do not believe they are responsible for managing the allegation process,” the report said.

The overall results of the employee survey were “favorable,” the IG stressed, though they suggest a need for improved training and improved behavior by leaders.

“Without oversight through defined policies and program management,” the watchdog warned, “DHS cannot make informed decisions to improve the program and ensure all components manage the misconduct process consistently. Additionally, this shortcoming could lead to costly litigation due to inappropriate or unenforceable disciplinary determinations.”

Those inadequate policies also mean “the department cannot ensure it treats all employees equally or that components have properly addressed or referred all misconduct allegations.”

The survey asked respondents about specific actions taken by supervisors faced with misconduct, starting with verbal counseling, a letter of counseling, a letter of reprimand, suspension, demotion and removal. While the average reporting of the most serious step, removal, was 24% departmentwide, reported removals were 32% at the Transportation Security Administration. TSA was followed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (28%), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (26%), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (22%), and Customs and Border Protection (14%).

Similar variations appeared in the answer to the statement: “Senior leaders in my component are less likely to be disciplined for violating workplace rules, regulations.” The portion of employees answering “agree” was 58% at TSA, 52% at CBP, 48% at ICE, 39% at FEMA and 35% at USCIS.

A key problem, the analysis said, is that the department’s policy “allows each component to develop and administer its own policy; however, Employee Relations has not ensured the components’ existing disciplinary policies are consistent with the department’s policy.” That policy, those officials said, lacks definitions because “additional definitions were not important or are already included in federal regulations.” And those performance standards require supervisors to “address conduct in a timely and

<https://www.govexec.com/management/2019/06/homeland-security-employees-arent-disciplined-consistently-misconduct/157897/>

appropriate manner and promptly address allegations with appropriate action.” Terms such as “timely” and “appropriate” are vague and interpreted differently, the report said.

DHS had “no departmentwide misconduct allegation data,” the report noted, even though between 2012 and 2016, seven Office of Inspector General, two Government Accountability Office, and three internal department or component reports identified issues related to DHS and component misconduct or disciplinary programs. In November 2016, Employee Relations issued its first directive and implementing instruction, which the survey attempted to evaluate.

In eight recommendations to Randolph Alles, acting deputy undersecretary for management, the IG proposed that Alles designate or establish an entity with sufficient size and authority to oversee the department’s entire misconduct process; ensure the designated entity implement a formal reporting process, with documented procedures for handling and reporting all misconduct allegations; and that the Chief Human Capital Officer revise the DHS Discipline and Adverse Actions Program directive and instruction to provide comprehensive guidance, including definitions for key misconduct terms and the use of alternative discipline.

DHS managers agreed.

The area of misconduct is only one of many challenges the department faces in creating a common culture among its component agencies with related but distinct missions. Information sharing and moving to a new headquarters have also been difficult.

Investigation into Marine 1-star alleges bullying, humiliating subordinates and devaluing women

By Todd South

Marine Corps Times, June 20, 2019



Marine Corps Col. Norman Cooling, G-3, Regional Command South West, speak to members of International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan, and Pakistan military officials at the Joint Border Coordination Center for a border flag meeting at Forward Operating Base, Spin Boldak, Kandahar province, Afghanistan, June 21, 2011. (Sgt. Joseph Johnson/DoD)

A recently released Pentagon report alleges that the former general in charge of legislative affairs for the [Marine Corps](#) “disparaged, bullied, and humiliated subordinates, devalued women” and created a negative [work environment](#) during his seven and a half months in the job.

Brig. Gen. Norm Cooling was [fired from his job](#) as legislative assistant to the commandant in February 2018 and did not receive a previously recommended promotion to major general. He now serves as assistant deputy commandant, plans, policies and operations.

The [Department of Defense Inspector General](#) found that Cooling had, “created a hostile work environment through disparaging treatment of personnel that led to a ‘general distrust’ of his impartiality toward women and his overall leadership.”

Cooling disputed nearly every aspect of the report’s allegations against him and provided a statement to Marine Corps Times Thursday.

- [Commandant suspends top adviser \[2018-02-28\]](#)

“At no time during my seven months in the Office of Legislative Affairs, nor at any other time during my 33-year career, have I ever negatively singled out anyone for anything other than their job performance,” Cooling wrote in an email. “I inadvertently offended some through random remarks that were taken in a different context than I intended. Additionally, there were statements attributed to me that I unequivocally did not make or were purposefully embellished.”

Cooling is a 1986 Naval Academy graduate who spent most of his career in ground combat billets and later in U.S. European Command before taking on the legislative assistant position from July 2017 to February 2018.

The [report](#) was released publicly this week. Investigators recommended the Marine Corps take appropriate action based on their findings.

Headquarters Marine Corps spokesman Maj. Brian Block told Marine Corps Times that the Corps “takes all allegations of misconduct seriously, regardless of rank.”

Block wrote in an email response that the Corps is “currently reviewing the DoD IG’s report and will take appropriate action in light of the substantiated misconduct.”

The alleged comments and conduct that led to his initial firing included:

- Telling a Marine subordinate he would “castrate” him if he had withheld information.
- Saying that women in combat roles were hurting male Marines who had to take up slack and could no longer refer to rifle parts with female genitalia references.
- Saying women made better schedulers or secretaries.

<https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/your-marine-corps/2019/06/20/investigation-into-marine-1-star-alleges-bullying-humiliation-and-devaluing-women/>

- Saying that women had less propensity to serve in the infantry.
- Asking staffers if they were “trying to f**k him” by giving him information late.
- Saying he would “jump out the f**king window” if any staff performed like a specific female officer.
- Saying he would rather his daughter work in a brothel than be a Marine Corps pilot.
- Telling the senior Marine Corps Public Affairs commander to “watch out” for a female Marine he believed caused him to be fired from his legislative post.

Investigators with the Department of Defense Inspector General’s office interviewed 37 witnesses, many of whom confirmed and added to allegations made by a Senate Armed Services Committee complaint made to the inspector in February 2018.

But others disagreed with how Cooling was characterized and what others alleged that Cooling said at various instances.

Nearly two dozen witnesses who interacted with Cooling had various responses to the work environment he fostered.

A few said that he “was respectful toward everybody” while some called him an “equal opportunity offender.”

Others accused him of single-minded careerism.

“He was purely self-motivated for promotion for himself and he would say or do anything, and demand anything of his staff that would facilitate that,” one witness told investigators.

And others had glowing comments for the workplace and how they were treated.



Former Legislative Assistant to the Commandant Brig. Gen. Norman Cooling was fired from his position in February 2018. A Department of Defense Inspector General's report details allegations of inappropriate comments that led to a hostile work environment. (Marine Corps)

“I feel like he always treated me as a Marine first, like professionally and we developed trust because I was good at my job,” another witness said.

Some of the alleged — and disputed — behavior included allegations of him yelling down the office hallway that he would “castrate” a Marine staffer if that person had been withholding information from him. The staffer saw the remark as “inappropriate,” “immature” and “disrespectful,” but did not consider it a threat.

“I have no recollection of saying anything to that nature. I mean, I might kid somebody but not with castration per se,” Cooling said in the report.

In September 2017, report authors allege Cooling asked two of his staff if they are “trying to f**k” him by giving him information late when they delivered a list of 2019 congressional fellows that did not have more ground combat Marines than the previous year’s list.

Cooling said his typical profanity was the words “hell,” “damn” or “bullsh*t” but he couldn’t deny whether he use the F-word.

In October 2017, Cooling allegedly told a Senate staff member that opening combat roles to women had adversely affected male Marines. In the report witnesses said he that because women were physically inferior to men that male Marines had to “pick up the slack” during training and “men have had a difficult

<https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/your-marine-corps/2019/06/20/investigation-into-marine-1-star-alleges-bullying-humiliation-and-devaluing-women/>

time adjusting to open combat roles because they can no longer refer to certain rifle parts as female body parts.”

But Cooling responded in the report by saying he “did not say those things at all,” saying the first example is not factually correct and body parts comment elicited an even stronger response.

“Well, one that’s a ludicrous statement,” Cooling said. “Two, I don’t recall having any conversation [like that] at all with anybody on the Senate staff.”

At a December 2017 congressional fellows breakfast during a question and answer session witnesses allege he made the remark that women make better schedulers and secretaries.

The one-star denied using the word secretary but did admit to saying that in his experience women make better schedulers. But he added that he saw that as a compliment noting the importance of that job among congressional staffers.

Some in the breakfast took offense to the comment seeing it as demeaning to women and brushing off the position as “menial.”

Later in December, witnesses later told investigators that Cooling told a female noncommissioned officer in passing that he would rather see his daughter work in a brothel than be a Marine Corps pilot.

The episode was in the legislative office late at night and Cooling’s deputy was speaking with the female NCO about her career plans when she finished officer candidate school. The female NCO said she wanted to be a pilot.

Cooling, a career infantryman, said he was telling a version of a joke often shared between ground combat and aviation Marines.

“The joke goes, ‘I would rather have a daughter in a brothel than a son that’s a pilot,’” he said. “That has nothing to do with gender discrimination or bias. It has everything to do with a good natured tease towards pilots and aspiring pilots.”

He did agree that the joke was in poor taste but didn’t meet the standard of bullying or creating a hostile work environment.

Cooling took the job in July 2017, and by August witnesses later said he had made comments at a congressional fellows breakfast that the Marine Corps didn’t have a “culture problem” following the Marines United scandal, contradicting what Commandant Gen. Robert B. Neller had testified to Congress months before.

The Marines United scandal resulted from a Facebook user group with more than 50,000 members who shared a database of nude photos of women, including female Marines, that had disparaging comments about the women in the photos.

Subsequent investigations led to prosecutions, courts-martial and administrative actions for more than 100 personnel, according to the report.

But, Cooling said in his rebuttal to the initial investigation that he told fellows and staffers that he and other general grade officers had advised the commandant not to say that the entire Corps had a culture problem but that it was a result of a handful of Marines and Marine veterans who were causing problems.

“Now, and I also added very specifically that that doesn’t mean that we don’t have cultural issues that we have to work on, changing laws and regulations and societal norms all require us to change certain aspects of our culture,” Cooling told the IG. “That’s different than saying our culture is broken.”

Also, at the August 2017 breakfast, some attendees said that he also made comments about the “propensity of women” Marines to serve in infantry or combat roles.

<https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/your-marine-corps/2019/06/20/investigation-into-marine-1-star-alleges-bullying-humiliation-and-devaluing-women/>

Some female Marines in the meeting took “propensity” as a “catch phrase” used as a rationale for why women should not be allowed in the infantry, according to the report.

But, Cooling argued in his defense, that “propensity” was a term used within Marine Corps recruiting to note the lack of interest or desire that female Marines had in serving in those jobs.

The inspectors somewhat relented on that count, noting that the comment did not violate applicable standards.

[Todd South](#) is a Marine veteran of the Iraq War. He has written about crime, courts, government and military issues for multiple publications since 2004. In 2014, he was named a Pulitzer finalist for local reporting on a project he co-wrote about witness problems in gang criminal cases. Todd covers ground combat for Military Times.

Marine 1-Star Fires Back After He's Accused of Devaluing Women, Humiliating Staff

By Gina Harkins

Military.com, June 20, 2019



U.S. Marine Corps Col. Norman Cooling speaks at Forward Operating Base, Spin Boldak, Kandahar province, Afghanistan, June 21, 2011. (Sgt. Joseph Johnson/U.S. Marine Corps)

The [Marine Corps](#) general found to have repeatedly made derogatory statements about women and to have bullied his staff is hitting back against the findings of a monthslong investigation into his wrongdoing.

Brig. Gen. Norm Cooling, the assistant deputy commandant for Marine Corps Plans, Policies and Operations, said [a 47-page investigation](#) into his time leading the service's legislative affairs office includes "statements attributed to me that I unequivocally did not make or were purposefully embellished."

"At no time during my seven months in the Office of Legislative Affairs, nor at any other time during my 33-year career, have I ever negatively singled out anyone for anything other than their job performance," Cooling told Military.com.

The Defense Department's inspector general investigated Cooling over 15 months following a complaint from the Senate Armed Services Committee that he'd made disparaging remarks about women. That investigation, Cooling said, failed to find instances in which he violated any laws or equal employment opportunity standards.

"I inadvertently offended some through random remarks that were taken in a different context other than I intended," Cooling said. "... Had I been less demanding or willing to compromise standards, these allegations -- which surfaced only during the promotion confirmation process -- would have never emerged."

Related content:

- [Marine 1-Star Demeaned Women and Berated Staff, Investigation Finds](#)
- [One-Star Falsely Claimed Flight Hours, Mistreated Subordinates: IG Report](#)
- [He Was Fired for Degrading Female Marines. Now He Wants Marines to Learn from His Mistakes](#)

Cooling, who became Commandant Gen. Robert Neller's legislative assistant in July 2017, said he set out to improve the performance of the office, which works closely with lawmakers, congressional staffers and military liaisons on Capitol Hill.

"But I did not account for the politically charged environment in which it operates," he added.

Inspectors with the Pentagon's top watchdog office recommended that Neller "take appropriate action" after they substantiated several instances of Cooling's misconduct. That included violating Defense Department and [Navy](#) regulations on harassment prevention and abuse of authority, the report states.

Cooling made several comments in front of Marines and congressional staffers that devalued women, the investigators found, and also created a negative work environment that led to distrust.

He once told a male subordinate he would castrate him if he found out he'd withheld budget information from him, the report states. He also threatened to "jump out of the f---ing window" over a female officer's job performance, and said women make better secretaries than men, the investigation found.

<https://www.military.com/daily-news/2019/06/20/marine-1-star-fires-back-after-hes-accused-devaluing-women-humiliating-staff.html>

Cooling said opening combat jobs to women hurt the men serving in those roles and told a Marine aspiring to become a naval aviator that he'd "rather his daughter work in a brothel than be a female Marine pilot," the report states.

The general disputed some of the findings in the report, telling investigators he didn't recall making some of the comments witnesses described or that they were made jokingly. At one point, he told investigators the analysis should be removed from their report since they didn't find his statements had violated any standards.

They disagreed and stood by their findings.

"We determined that BGen Cooling conducted himself in a less than exemplary manner in his treatment of subordinates or in comments that devalued women on seven occasions during his [seven]-month and 17-day tenure at OLA," the investigators wrote.

The [Naval Academy](#) graduate and career infantry officer said the many men and women he's served with over more than three decades can attest to his fairness. His experience as the commandant's legislative assistant has, however, changed his leadership style, he said.

"I can say that I would be more sensitive to the environment as, from the outset, I never intended to cause anyone offense," Cooling said.

Whether Cooling will remain in his current assignment following the completed investigation, which was published Wednesday, remains to be seen. Leaders are currently reviewing the report and will take appropriate action in light of the substantiated misconduct, Maj. Brian Block, a Marine spokesman at the Pentagon, said this week.

"The Marine Corps expects every Marine, uniformed and civilian -- and particularly those in leadership positions -- to hold themselves to the highest standards in their personal and professional conduct," he said.

The claims against Cooling occurred as Marine leaders work to end gender bias following a scandal in which more than 100 Marines were found to have shared nude photos of their female colleagues without permission. Cooling, according to the investigation, fought back against the idea that the service was facing a problem in its culture -- directly disputing a claim Neller, the service's top leader, made while testifying on Capitol Hill.

As Cooling awaits his fate, he said he remains grateful for the opportunity to serve with Marines.

"It has been my life, and I could not have asked or hoped for a better one," he said.

-- Gina Harkins can be reached at gina.harkins@military.com. Follow her on Twitter [@ginaaharkins](#).

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When DODEA investigates its teachers for bullying, parents say they're left in the dark

By Jennifer H. Svan

Stars and Stripes, June 23, 2019



Candace Balfour and Sgt. 1st Class Edward Balfour are pictured with their children in their home at Robinson Barracks in Stuttgart, Germany. Bryson Washington sits on the floor with a book. The Balfours said they were frustrated and angry at the way the military's school system handled a finding of emotional abuse substantiated by the Family Advocacy Program against Bryson's former teacher.

JOHN VANDIVER/STARS AND STRIPES

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — The special education teacher thrust a mirror in her student's face as he sobbed.

“Look at yourself,” she scolded the boy. “Look at how disgusting that looks.”

The boy, fifth-grader Bryson Washington, was enrolled at the time in Stuttgart Elementary School's program for students with moderate to severe disabilities, part of the Department of Defense Education Activity system in Europe.

The incident was part of a pattern of abuse that went on in the special needs classroom for months: Bryson would forget a word or write outside the lines, the teacher would punish him, and he'd act out.

But the mirror episode was the tipping point. Soon after, an anonymous report was made to the Family Advocacy Program, the military's equivalent of civilian child protective services.

A Family Advocacy investigation validated an allegation of emotional abuse against the teacher in October.

Bryson's parents, Candace Balfour and Sgt. 1st Class Edward Balfour, were devastated, but hopeful the school would act swiftly to mitigate the harm done to their son.

That didn't occur.

Although DODEA officials said they do not tolerate abusive conduct of any kind and that “students are at the heart of everything we do,” what happened to the Balfours and others who contacted Stars and Stripes suggests otherwise.

Ten parents, including the Balfours, and former school employees described disturbing behavior involving teachers at three DODEA schools in Europe. Their allegations include educators berating and mocking second graders, calling a kindergartner by a racist term and locking a special needs fourth-grader out of the classroom.

Just as troubling as the teachers' alleged misconduct, said those interviewed, was the response from DODEA.

When teacher misconduct was reported to school principals and higher-ups, parents said they were kept in the dark about what action, if any, DODEA took.

When DODEA teachers were disciplined, the punishment they received was temporary and they were back teaching within months, often in the same classroom.

<https://www.stripes.com/news/europe/when-dodea-investigates-its-teachers-for-bullying-parents-say-they-re-left-in-the-dark-1.587229>

The stories told to Stars and Stripes by DODEA parents and former employees portray a school system mired in inertia and lacking in transparency and accountability. While abusive teachers exist in other systems, public and private, those schools answer to school boards or state departments of education.

But complaints or concerns about DODEA schools are addressed by DODEA itself, leading parents to believe they have few rights and less recourse when dealing with apparent teacher misconduct. Not even base commanders have authority over DODEA on many matters, though they may have some input.

“It’s like the fox watching the hen house,” said Elizabeth Wright, the mother of a special needs fourth-grader.

‘Pegged him as broken’

The Wrights’ son started third grade at Patch Elementary School in Stuttgart in 2017. Elizabeth and Col. Jason Wright had adopted their son from foster care when he was 3. The boy had experienced early childhood trauma and was diagnosed with anxiety but showed no significant behavioral or academic problems at his school in Texas, the Wrights said.

Their experience at the DODEA school in Stuttgart was markedly different.

Their son’s third grade teacher told the Wrights he was “scary” and “the worst child” she had ever seen, the parents told Stars and Stripes. He was constantly sent out of the room and soon fell behind academically.

“They saw a black, adopted kid and pegged him as broken,” Elizabeth Wright said.

In fourth grade, when the Wrights’ son was put on an individualized education plan, or IEP, for an emotional disability, the alleged abuse worsened.

As part of his IEP, the Wrights’ son had permission to seek a “safe space” when he felt anxious or frustrated. Usually, he would go sit in a nearby office, but his teacher shamed him for missing class time, locked him out of the classroom if he left and sometimes refused to let him leave at all, Elizabeth Wright said.

At home, their son started to call himself “a monster,” she said.

Elizabeth Wright said the trauma her son experienced as a toddler left him with a fear response, where he kicks doors, pushes things onto the floor and looks out of control. This behavior is often mistaken for aggression or defiance, but he is not a threat, she said.

“We tried to inform educators (at Patch) on what trauma response or triggers look like,” she said, but nothing changed and the teacher stopped communicating with the family.

The Wrights wrote to the DODEA Europe-East superintendent, asking for the school to be investigated and, when that went unheeded, filed a due process complaint alleging that the school had failed to provide their son with the fair and appropriate education he is guaranteed by law.

District officials asked the Wrights to withdraw the complaint to allow them to do the original investigation, Jason Wright said. That investigation was conducted in February; the Wrights are still waiting for the written results.

“They talked to all the people we thought they should talk to,” Jason Wright said. “They drew up recommendations and plans ... of what they would do and how they would approach this, and shared parts of that with us over the phone.

“But it was not anything that we could hold in our hands,” he said. “Show us in writing what you’re doing, what you’ve done, what your next steps are. If you have to redact some of that, so be it. We’re still waiting on that.”

<https://www.stripes.com/news/europe/when-dodea-investigates-its-teachers-for-bullying-parents-say-they-re-left-in-the-dark-1.587229>

In March, the Wrights heard of another incident involving their son and filed a discrimination complaint with DODEA.

Less than a month later, DODEA closed the Wrights' case, citing, in a letter signed by DODEA Europe East Chief of Staff Louis D'Angelo, the fact that the parents had moved their child from Patch to Stuttgart Elementary School, and had "effectively removed your son from the setting where you alleged discrimination was present, thus resolving the situation without additional action required."

The Wrights were outraged.

"This isn't just about our son," Elizabeth Wright said. "We still don't know if there has been any accountability. In the end, we had to remove our son, and he's still hurt – just because we are no longer at that school doesn't erase what happened to him."

'He was in a box'

The Balfour family had a similar experience with their son, Bryson, after moving to Germany in November 2017.

The family thought Bryson's tears and anxiety were caused by the stress of moving overseas and changing schools. But a paraprofessional who worked with Bryson tipped them off that there might be a deeper, more specific reason.

Special education paraprofessional Erica Camacho had seen how, if Bryson wrote outside the lines, the teacher would make him erase his work and rewrite it, sometimes spending hours to get it right.

She had seen Bryson being punished for forgetting a word. She'd seen the teacher tell him to stand in a corner, facing the wall, barricaded by gym mats, sometimes for 45 minutes or more.

"He was in a box, so he couldn't look out the window or over his shoulder at what the other students were doing," said Camacho, who had worked with Bryson since the spring of 2018.

"I would come home and tell my husband ... I must be going crazy because what I was taught ... the laws that I know protect (special education) students are supposed to apply no matter where we are," Camacho said. "But no one seems to be saying anything,"

Bryson's saga hit its nadir last year for Camacho. As Bryson quietly sang a song in class to soothe himself and stop his tears, Camacho recalled how the teacher said to her, "Look at him. He's crazy."

"He heard her, and he told her, 'I'm not crazy,' and started hysterically crying," Camacho said.

"He was crying so much, he had snot coming down his face," she added. That's when the teacher held a mirror in front of the boy and told him he looked disgusting, Camacho said.

"I was, like, no way this is normal. I almost started to cry," she said.

Camacho said she didn't trust the principal enough to report the incident to her, so she encouraged the family to ask Bryson specific questions about his day.

Substantiated abuse

Soon after the incident, Family Advocacy received an anonymous complaint alleging abusive behavior by Bryson's teacher. The Balfours and Camacho said they were not behind the complaint.

In late October, Family Advocacy substantiated emotional abuse claims against Bryson's teacher, according to a copy of a memorandum, which the Balfours shared with Stars and Stripes.

<https://www.stripes.com/news/europe/when-dodea-investigates-its-teachers-for-bullying-parents-say-they-re-left-in-the-dark-1.587229>

Bryson and another boy were moved to a different classroom. The teacher was placed on administrative leave while an investigation was conducted. She returned to the same classroom after the investigation was completed but was later moved to a different school, the Balfours said.

In November, the Balfours asked DODEA to conduct an internal investigation into what happened in their son's classroom and how the school handled the incident.

At first, there was no response.

But four months later, the base commander of U.S. Army Garrison Stuttgart, Col. Neal Corson, heard about the Balfours' issues with the school and pledged to push for an investigation. At the same time, however, he stressed he did not have the authority to tell DODEA what to do.

Corson's interest in the case appeared to get things rolling, but the process soon stalled again. DODEA referred the investigation to the community superintendent, who interviewed the Balfours, Camacho and others in April. The Balfours say there has been no follow-up.

"The intent of the system is to wait you out," Edward Balfour said.

The Balfours were fed up. The family requested an early return to the States so Bryson can attend a private school that can accommodate his needs when he starts middle school in the fall.

"Even though we heard great things about the middle school (in Stuttgart), it's still the same school system, the same leadership," Candace Balfour said. "They've lost our respect and trust. I don't want to put our family through that another year."

Systemic differences

In the last three years, 65 DODEA teachers have been terminated. Because DODEA says it cannot go into detail about individual cases, and because, as federal employees, DODEA teachers are protected by strict privacy laws, it's impossible to report how many of those teachers were fired for abusive behavior toward children.

Information about teacher disciplinary actions is more transparent in public school districts stateside.

The Texas Education Agency, for example, lists on its website teachers who have been suspended, reprimanded, surrendered their teaching license or had it revoked, or been the subject of other disciplinary action.

In Pennsylvania, the public can submit educator misconduct complaints to the department of education using an online form, and disciplinary action taken against teachers is published on the department's website.

Stars and Stripes chose not to name the teachers described in this story for now, because they are not public figures and because not all had been formally investigated by DODEA or charged by law enforcement — though the parents and other educators interviewed said that a lack of proper investigation is at the heart of the problem.

Three of the DODEA teachers described in this story were contacted for comment. Two did not respond while Bryson's former teacher referred inquiries to Jan Freeman, a lawyer at the Federal Education Association, the largest DODEA teacher's union.

Freeman said that while she cannot comment on an ongoing investigation, FEA supports the process "and we are confident that the facts will emerge."

In the 2018-19 school year, there were six reported allegations of child abuse involving DODEA employees in Europe, DODEA spokesman Will Griffin said. He did not say how many of those allegations were substantiated.

<https://www.stripes.com/news/europe/when-dodea-investigates-its-teachers-for-bullying-parents-say-they-re-left-in-the-dark-1.587229>

Some in the Stuttgart community say that number is too low, and that abuse often goes unreported because employees are afraid to speak up.

Griffin said that DODEA employees are required to take action if they become aware of abusive conduct.

“We do not tolerate abusive conduct of any kind in our schools, regardless of who the perpetrator may be,” Griffin said, adding that “any employee who becomes aware of abusive conduct has a legal and ethical obligation to act, whether it is in a reporting or investigative capacity.”

Judy Rae Merhar, a former long-term substitute at Hainerberg Elementary School in Wiesbaden, met that obligation after a kindergarten teacher reportedly told a black boy he looked like “an ape without a brain in his body.” The same teacher routinely punished kids by making them stand alone in the bathroom or outside the classroom.

Merhar documented the educator’s behavior for nearly three months last year and filed a report with the principal.

The teacher was removed from the classroom for the last two weeks of school but returned last fall.

Merhar said no one interviewed her or any of the parents about the teacher’s conduct, but the school did ask Merhar whether she would be satisfied if they put the teacher through counseling and training.

No, she replied, that wouldn’t go far enough. “She should not be teaching any children.”

svan.jennifer@stripes.com

Twitter: [@stripesktown](https://twitter.com/stripesktown)

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Racism

A mother reported a teen bully for racially taunting her son. Then he beat her unconscious, attorney says.

By Allyson Chiu

The Washington Post, June 26, 2019



VIDEO. *Beronica Ruiz, 35, was hospitalized June 19 after she was allegedly attacked by a 13-year-old boy who she reported had racially taunted her son. (ABC7)*

When Beronica Ruiz went to pick up her 12-year-old son from school in Passaic, N.J., last week, it wasn't the first time that day she needed to be there. Hours earlier, Ruiz and her husband had met with the school's vice principal over concerns that their son was

threatened by other students who allegedly chanted "All Mexicans should go back behind the wall," the family's attorney told The Washington Post.

The New Jersey couple were upset the school didn't inform them about the taunts but left the June 19 meeting feeling "somewhat reassured" after the vice principal said he would contact the students and their parents, said Daniel Santiago, the lawyer.

But as Ruiz, who was pushing her 1-year-old daughter in a stroller, walked home from Passaic Gifted and Talented Academy School No. 20 with her son that afternoon, the boy noticed they weren't alone. Three boys trailed behind — and he recognized them.

"[He] turned to his mother and said, 'Mom, those are the children that were threatening me, and they're following us,'" Santiago said.

Moments later, [a 13-year-old boy allegedly attacked](#). Santiago said the boy first punched Ruiz's son in the face. When the 35-year-old mother tried to step in, the teen hit her and "threw her to the ground," causing her to lose consciousness, Santiago said.

"This was a brutal hate crime, and it was committed by a 13-year-old," Santiago said. "I don't know what circumstances could give rise to a 13-year-old boy having such hate in his heart that he would commit this brutal attack and leave a woman essentially to die in front of her children without any remorse or any twinge of conscience."



Beronica Ruiz, 35, suffered facial fractures and a concussion, her attorney said. (Daniel Santiago/Courtesy of Daniel Santiago)

Ruiz was hospitalized for two days after the alleged beating, which left her with facial fractures and a concussion, Santiago said.

On Tuesday, the Passaic County Prosecutor's Office [announced](#) that the 13-year-old, who fled the scene, had been arrested and charged following the June 19 incident. He faces one count each of aggravated assault and simple assault, and has been released to his parents pending an appearance in family court, according to the news release. The attack was condemned by Passaic City Mayor Hector C. Lora, who said in a statement to The Post he was "outraged" and added that "what happened to the mother is unacceptable."

"This incident is being taken extremely seriously. I have met with and spoken personally with the family," Lora said. "I have met with my chief of police, local officials and school administration as well as board members to make sure there is accountability and that this family receives justice as well as any help and resources we can provide so they can heal and feel safe."

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/06/26/mother-teen-bully-assault-mexico/>

However, Santiago maintains that the violent attack could have been avoided if the school had responded differently to the initial bullying complaint, noting that he is planning to file a lawsuit on behalf of the family. School officials did not respond to requests for comment late Tuesday.

“Just practically speaking, if the boy wasn’t in school, if he had been disciplined for actually using racially charged slurs, this attack would not have happened,” the attorney said.

The 13-year-old suspect is African American, Santiago said. Ruiz and her husband are Mexican and are in the United States on work permits while they await green cards, but their children are American citizens, he said.

The day before the alleged assault, Santiago said Ruiz’s son was in the school cafeteria when a group of students started mocking him about his ethnicity, telling him, “Go back behind the wall.”

In response to the bullies, Santiago said the boy “quite astutely” pointed out, “We’re all immigrants, so what are you talking about?” But instead of defusing the situation, “the other boys became violent” and started threatening Ruiz’s son, Santiago said.

“He pulled one of the teachers aside and said, ‘I’m scared for my safety,’ ” the lawyer said. “The teacher grabbed the attention of a security guard, and they essentially sequestered my client’s son in a room for his own safety.”

Though the school appeared to see “the threat as very real,” Santiago said Ruiz and her husband were not made aware of what happened until their son told them.

During the meeting with the school’s vice principal, the administrator admitted fault, telling the parents that “it slipped his mind” and “he should have contacted them,” Santiago claimed.

“That in itself is a woefully inadequate response,” he said, later adding, “If my son’s health and his well-being and indeed his life was in danger and the school knew about it and they failed to report it to me, someone dropped the ball. That is a failure on the school district’s part.”

It is not exactly clear what motivated the 13-year-old to allegedly go after Ruiz and her son, but the mother [told](#) NBC New York that the teen was swearing loudly when he approached the family on the street. Ruiz said when she tried to get the 13-year-old to stop, he told her to “shut up” and punched her.

By the time she regained consciousness and called the police, her attacker was gone, Santiago said. But it wasn’t long before Ruiz saw him again.

When Ruiz was released from the hospital, she and her husband took their son back to school only to discover that the teen was still attending classes “as if nothing had happened,” Santiago said.

“They spoke to the vice principal again, and the response they received was, ‘Well, he has the right to an education just as much as your son does,’ ” Santiago said.

The boy was suspended only after Ruiz’s husband called Lora, the mayor, Santiago said. (Lora has not commented on his involvement.) It is unclear whether the other two boys present that afternoon have faced disciplinary action, though Santiago said they “tried to stop the 13-year-old.”

The school has also now offered to pay for the family’s medical bills, Santiago said.

“We do appreciate the gesture,” he said, “but at this point, it’s too little too late.”

Santiago said that while Ruiz’s physical injuries have started to heal, “her emotional wounds are slower to recover.”

“My son, he can’t sleep, and I don’t sleep because I am very worried,” Ruiz [told](#) ABC7 News.

In Tuesday’s statement, prosecutors made no mention of hate crime charges, although that’s how Santiago categorizes what happened.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/06/26/mother-teen-bully-assault-mexico/>

“This began by boys chanting that Mexicans should go back behind the wall,” he said. “What spurred them to threaten violence was [Ruiz’s son] advising that we all come from immigrants. . . . That anger triggered in this young boy enough hate and enough fury to attack a woman, an adult, with no fear.”

[Allyson Chiu](#) Allyson Chiu is a reporter with The Washington Post's Morning Mix team. She has previously contributed to the South China Morning Post and the Pacific Daily News. [Follow](#)

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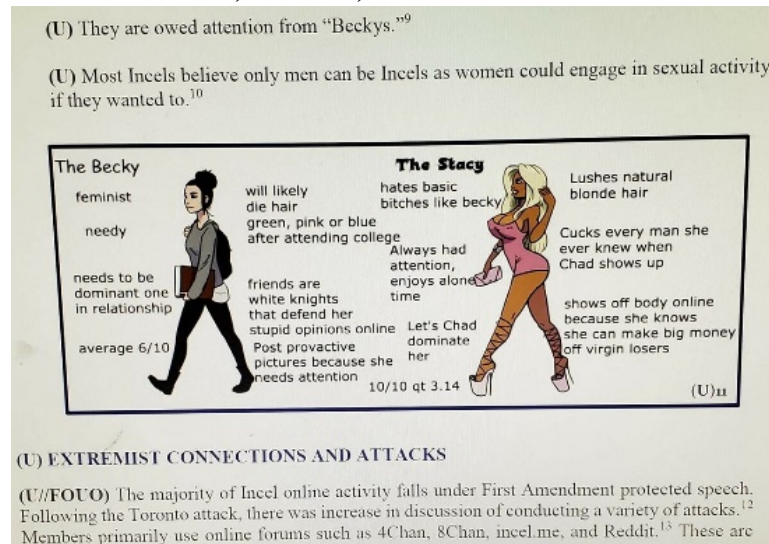
[Bully accused of racist comments charged with beating classmate, his mother](#) [USA TODAY, 2019-06-26]

Sexism

Air Force cautions troops to beware of sexless ‘involuntary celibates’

By J.D. Simkins

Air Force Times, June 21, 2019



A recent brief at Joint Base Andrews warned of radicalized incels. (Air Force amn/nco/snco)

A safety brief analyzing security concerns at one military installation offered up an eccentric example of a potential hazard when instructors warned airmen in attendance of the growing threat of incels, or involuntary celibates.

The online-based community of introverted, sexless individuals that may have started decades ago as an innocuous attempt at achieving a sense of belonging has, in recent

years, become a label for a more aggressive sect of repugnant men who cast the entirety of the blame for their coitus-free existence onto women.

This scorn has manifested in the form of heinous misogyny shared over online message boards, and in a handful of cases, escalated into deadly violence.

In the wake of learning Army veteran and Dallas courthouse shooter, [Brian Isaack Clyde](#), was an active participant in the incel subculture, at least one base — Maryland’s Joint Base Andrews — is now taking measures to educate service members on the warning signs — including the use of a popular meme Clyde shared on his social media — of potential violence carried out by the incel community.

In the time leading up to the shooting, Clyde shared a version of the incel meme known as “[Virgin vs. Chad](#),” in which the characteristics of an incel man are stacked up against his antithesis. In Clyde’s case, the meme contrasted the ways in which the Virgin and Chad would carry out a mass shooting, according to the [Dallas Morning News](#).

Clyde, who was found with a rifle and more than 150 rounds of ammunition on his body, was shot and killed by security officers shortly after he opened fire at the Earle Cabell Federal Building. There were no other casualties.

- [FBI got tip about Dallas courthouse shooter in 2016 while he was in the Army \[2019-06-20\]](#)

The “[Becky vs. Stacy](#)” iteration that was used during the brief at Andrews, one that was shared Tuesday to the popular Facebook page, [Air Force amn/nco/snco](#), depicts two types of women flanked by a series of debasing comments incels use to characterize those who refuse to enter romantic relationships with them.

Increased discussion in “extremist connections and attacks” from incels is cited in the brief along with other incel character traits, such as maintaining the belief that they are “owed attention from ‘Beckys.’”

“The content of this briefing was based upon law enforcement as well as public sources and was used to inform both military commanders and law enforcement personnel about a very real threat to military members and civilians,” Master Sgt. Jake Richmond, spokesman for Joint Base Andrews, told Military Times.

<https://www.airforcetimes.com/off-duty/military-culture/2019/06/21/air-force-cautions-troops-to-beware-of-sexless-involuntary-celibates/>

“The briefing aims to provide those audiences with the necessary tools to identify and prevent threats.”

One such threat came to a violent end in May 2014, when 22-year-old [Elliot Rodger shared a video](#) blaming women at UC Santa Barbara for his repeated romantic failures before going on a shooting and stabbing rampage on the school’s campus.

The same day as the Isla Vista killings, Rodger posted a video titled, “Why do girls hate me so much?” in which he ranted against women at the school.

“I don’t know why you girls are so repulsed by me. I do everything I can to appear attractive to you. I dress nice, I am sophisticated, I am magnificent. I have a nice car, a BMW. . . I am polite,” he said.

“I am the ultimate gentleman. And yet, you girls never give me a chance. I don’t know why. I feel so invisible as I walk through my college. Your revealing shorts, your cascading blonde hair, your pretty faces. I want one for a girlfriend. I deserve girls much more than all those slobs. . . . I should be the one with the girls. I mean, look at me? I’m gorgeous. But you girls don’t see it.”

Rodger killed six and injured 14 more before shooting himself in his vehicle. The video has since been taken down.

In April 2018, Alek Minassian allegedly hopped his rental van onto a sidewalk in downtown Toronto, ramming pedestrians in an attack that left 10 dead and 16 wounded.

Some incels on online forums, such as the popular “4Chan,” went as far as to celebrate the alleged killer in the wake of the attack, using Minassian’s image as avatars and [calling for follow-up hostilities](#) using “mass rape,” “poison,” and “mass acid attacks.”

Whether the Joint Base Andrews example is part of a DoD-wide initiative remains unclear, but Richmond made clear that Andrews wants to remain out in front of any potential hazards.

“The safety and security of our installation personnel and families are paramount.”

[J.D. Simkins](#) is a writer and editor for Military Times who was a Marine scout observer from 2004-2008. He ugly cried when the Washington Capitals won the 2018 Stanley Cup.

Sexual Assault / Harassment

How far should victims have to go to prove military sexual trauma?

By Natalie Gross

Military Times, June 21, 2019



An official Air Force photo that aims to remind service members that "victims don't wear name tags." (Senior Airman Marc I. Lane/Air Force)

The Department of Veterans Affairs is opposing a new bill that would expand access to disability benefits for survivors of military sexual trauma.

Department officials characterized the legislation at a congressional hearing Thursday as too broad, saying it would require the VA to approve claims based on a veteran's word alone without any corroborating evidence.

But after a [recent inspector general report](#) found the VA may have wrongly refused benefits to thousands of military sexual assault victims in recent years, supporters of the Servicemembers and Veterans Empowerment and Support Act of 2019 say changes are necessary to keep the department from retraumatizing victims who deserve to be compensated for what they went through — even if there's no paper trail.

“It is just unthinkable that in this day, we ask people to serve in the military, they have these horrendous experiences ... but then people present themselves for claims — and many of them going back an incredibly long period of time — and then hit these brick walls,” said Rep. Chellie Pingree, D-Maine, who introduced the legislation.

Among other things, the bill would lessen the burden of proof for military sexual assault survivors applying for disability benefits, requiring the VA to resolve every reasonable doubt in favor of the veteran, as is already standard VA practice for claims of combat-related PTSD.

- [Sexual assault: Here are the bases where troops are most at risk \[2018-09-21\]](#)

It would also put into law that veterans can submit evidence outside of their official Department of Defense records, including police records, statements from family members and evidence of change in behavior following the traumatic event.

Thousands of veterans could be affected by these changes.

Approximately 6 percent of female service members and 0.7 percent of male service members were victims of sexual assault in 2018, according to a Defense Department report released last month. The DoD estimates more than 20,000 service members had experienced some kind of assault last year, up from around 15,000 in 2016.

The VA receives an average of 18,000 claims related to military sexual trauma a year, and officials estimate this could jump to 30,000 or more by opening up service-connected disability benefits to mental health disorders other than PTSD.

Beth Murphy, executive director of compensation service at the VA, said the department has already expanded the type of evidence it considers as proof of military sexual trauma-related disorders, but to compare combat and military sexual trauma is going too far.

“The concern for liberalizing almost to a combat level is that the tenants of combat are such that it's not documenting and record keeping that is going on at that time. It's a serious situation with people ducking

<https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2019/06/21/how-far-should-victims-have-to-go-to-prove-military-sexual-trauma/>

and people trying just to execute the mission,” she said — to which Pingree responded that it’s often the same for victims of sexual abuse.

“Our concern is mainly that we would defaulting to the fact that this happened without an appropriate level of corroboration that we have in the current way we process claims,” Murphy said.

Expert witnesses at the hearing testified that it’s unusual for people to make up accusations of sexual assault.

“I don’t think this is an experience people want to share readily, let alone make up,” said Elizabeth Tarloski, an adjunct professor at William and Mary Law School who works in the school’s veterans’ benefits clinic. “I am concerned that differing standards kind of puts our PTSD survivors who are veterans in two different categories. We should believe those who are in combat who can’t document what happened, but we need additional evidence from those who suffer from (military sexual trauma), and to me that’s troubling.”

- [Here’s how a popular form of entertainment is helping veterans deal with pain \[2019-06-14\]](#)

Less controversial sections of the bill would expand the types of mental health conditions eligible for service-connected disability benefits beyond PTSD, including depression and anxiety, if military sexual trauma is found to be the originating cause — a provision the VA supports — and allow victims of online harassment, stalking or other forms of “technological abuse” to receive VA counseling and treatment for military sexual trauma.

VA officials said they are taking steps to fix past mistakes, which led to the VA Inspector General’s report that the department mishandled at least 1,300 cases during a six-month stretch in 2017 due to procedural and paperwork mistakes.

[Natalie Gross](#) has been reporting for Military Times since 2017. She grew up in a military family and has a master's degree in journalism from Georgetown University.

How the Navy tapped a jailed sex offender to be a department head

By Geoff Ziezulewicz

Navy Times, June 25, 2019



Lt. j.g. Michael D. McNeil is serving a 10-year prison term for attempted online enticement of a minor. Yet the Navy still tapped him to run a department. (Photo courtesy Clay County Sheriff's Office)

Lt. j.g. [Michael Douglas McNeil](#) recently joined dozens of other junior surface warfare officers in getting selected to be a future department head.

The [list](#) of those eligible for the afloat position was released Friday by [Navy Personnel Command](#).

But whether news of this career milestone reached the 31-year-old in federal prison remains unknown.

McNeil is currently serving a bid for trying to arrange sex with a 12-year-old deaf girl and is locked up until [2027](#) at a low-security facility in Texarkana, Texas.

Still active duty and still listed as being assigned to the guided-missile destroyer [Lassen](#), McNeil was sentenced to [10 years](#) in March by a federal judge in Florida.

- [Here's what happened to the officer who tried to arrange sex with a deaf child \[2019-03-28\]](#)

An eagle-eyed reader first alerted Navy Times to McNeil's inclusion on the list, and Military Times brought it up with the Navy.

When asked why McNeil was tapped as a future department head, Navy officials said his record hadn't been updated when the board convened.

The "civil action report" denoting that McNeil had been convicted had not made its way into his personnel file when the board met, according to Navy Personnel Command spokeswoman Cmdr. Krin Burzynski.

"Only the information contained in a military record is considered at a selection board," she said in an email Tuesday. "Any outside information that is not part of the official record cannot be considered or introduced. As such, Lt. j.g. McNeil was selected based on the available information at the time of the board."

The Navy is in the process of administratively separating McNeil, she said.

McNeil likely won't stay on the list because a future board "will review the records of all previously screened officers for any deviation from the 'best and fully qualified' standard," according to Burzynski.

"Officers are removed, or de-screened, from promotion and selection status depending on the decision of the board members after they have reviewed any newly introduced, adverse information in the officer's official record," she said. "The Navy reviews the records and status of all officers to ensure only the 'best and fully qualified' are selected."

McNeil pleaded guilty in December to one count of attempted online enticement of a minor.

As part of his plea deal, he waived his right to a Navy board of inquiry and will receive an "other than honorable" discharge.

The SWO department head board looks at officers with three to five years of commissioned service, and there are several years between selection and the beginning of a department head tour, Burzynski said.

- [Former sailor charged with sex crime \[2019-06-19\]](#)

<https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2019/06/25/how-the-navy-tapped-a-jailed-sex-offender-to-be-a-department-head/>

McNeil believed he was texting and messaging with the uncle of a 12-year-old deaf girl last August, but he was actually communicating with an undercover Clay County, Florida, sheriff's detective.

It started when the detective posted a meme to an online forum that read, "my adopted niece and I are looking for family fun," according to court records.

"Share her with me," McNeil responded on Aug. 27.

The next day, McNeil repeatedly pestered the undercover agent for pics of the child and said such an encounter had "been a fantasy of mine," according to court records.

"She's deaf," the detective told McNeil. "And I haven't learned sign language."

"Lol, its just you and her?" McNeil replied.

"yeah, (sic) just us," the detective said.

"Lucky guy ;)," McNeil said.

The two exchanged about 239 texts from Aug. 29 to Aug. 30, and McNeil sent an explicit photo of himself, asked for pics of the child and queried about her sexual experience, according to court records.

McNeil went to meet who he thought was the girl's uncle on Aug. 30 at a local Starbucks and was arrested.

In custody, he told authorities he was "a well-intentioned 'vigilante'" and was going to meet the uncle to identify "a potential criminal," authorities indicated.

Detectives explained to the officer why his vigilante alibi "didn't make sense," and McNeil told authorities he "wouldn't have went through with it," according to court records.

"I'm just...(expletive) up," McNeil said. "I'm a (expletive) idiot. I have a perfect life, perfect wife, perfect kid...curiosity got to me and...I (expletive) up. (Expletive) stupid. And now, you know, I could lose everything."

[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.

Pushing for VA policy change, congresswoman opens up about sexual assault

By Nikki Wentling

Stars and Stripes, June 20, 2019



Rep. Annie Kuster, D-N.H., listens as Rep. Chellie Pingree, D-Maine, speaks at a hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington on Thursday, June 20, 2019.

CARLOS BONGIOANNI/STARS AND STRIPES

WASHINGTON – Rep. Annie Kuster, speaking in a House hearing room Thursday, revealed details about the personal repercussions that she experienced from a sexual assault she endured as a young woman.

Kuster, a Democrat from New Hampshire who has previously spoken openly about her sexual assault, shared that 40 years later, she can't be alone in her home. Sometimes, she wakes up in the night screaming.

The realization that they were the after-effects of her assault didn't come until 2016, after she opened up about her experience on the House floor.

"It was in the midst of a press interview, and a reporter asked, 'What are the ramifications of this?'" Kuster said. "I started to say, 'Oh, I'm fine,' and then I realized — I didn't even understand the connection."

"I've never told anybody this," she added.

The remarks came Thursday during a hearing about the inconsistent history of the Department of Veterans Affairs and its decisions about disability benefits for veterans who claim they suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder related to military sexual assault. Last year, an investigation by the VA Office of Inspector General found the VA mishandled 1,300 claims for military sexual trauma during five months in 2017 — rejecting the claims without due diligence.

Kuster and other lawmakers have been attempting for years to pass legislation that would create more leniency for veterans who experienced military sexual trauma to get connected to VA benefits. Often, evidence is difficult to find for sexual assaults in the military because many of them are not reported, and victims don't typically seek immediate medical care, the bill's supporters argue.

About her own experience with sexual assault, Kuster said: "I didn't tell anyone for 40 years."



Willie Clark, deputy undersecretary for field operations with the Veterans Benefits Administration, testifies during a hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington on Thursday, June 20, 2019.

CARLOS BONGIOANNI/STARS AND STRIPES

H.R. 1092, the Servicemember and Veterans' Empowerment and Support Act, would lower a veteran's burden of proof. It requires the VA to afford benefits to veterans who have a mental health condition related to their service, along with an opinion from a medical professional who believes the condition stems from military sexual assault.

VA officials oppose the change, citing the high cost of approving the claims. Willie Clark, deputy undersecretary for field operations with the Veterans Benefits Administration, testified Thursday that the bill would cost the VA an estimated \$9.7 billion for 10 years.

<https://www.stripes.com/news/us/pushing-for-va-policy-change-congresswoman-opens-up-about-sexual-assault-1.586921>

Rep. Chellie Pingree, D-Maine, sponsors the House bill. She argued cost concerns shouldn't prevent the change from going through Congress.

"I'm just appalled I have to keep facing this argument every time we try to change the public policy," Pingree said. "We should feel a lot of anger and disappointment in not being able to fix this problem."

Besides lowering the standards of evidence, H.R. 1092 would expand eligibility for VA benefits to veterans who suffer from other mental health issues, besides PTSD, because of military sexual trauma. It would also include veterans who experienced sexual harassment online. VA officials said the agency supported those changes.

Also discussed at the hearing was last year's inspector general investigation, which found half of the claims related to military sexual trauma that were denied in 2017 were incorrectly processed.

Inspectors blamed the incorrect denials on flawed, inadequate training for veterans service representatives, who comb through veterans' records for signs of sexual trauma and make decisions about their claims.

The VA was ordered to review about 9,700 denied claims from 2017 and fix its errors. Clark said the VA was 92 percent complete with that task. The VA has found mistakes in 20 percent of the cases that it's reviewed so far, he testified.

The subcommittee also heard from experts who said survivors of military sexual trauma who come forward can be re-traumatized if they feel like they're not believed.

"By the time a person comes forward, it's taken so much courage... to be treated as if they're not telling the truth would shut them down and probably put them further into the pain that they're already in," said Sharyn Potter, executive director of research at the University of New Hampshire's Prevention Innovations Research Center.

The VA has completed two of six recommendations made by the IG last year about how it handles claims of military sexual trauma. It plans to finish the rest by the end of 2019.

In the meantime, it's uncertain when, or whether, the Servicemember and Veterans' Empowerment and Support Act might move to the House floor for a vote.

"I urge my colleagues to remain vigilant on this issue," Kuster said. "It is not an understatement to say lives hang in the balance."

wentling.nikki@stripes.com

Twitter: [@nikkiwentling](https://twitter.com/nikkiwentling)

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Ramstein airman guilty of sexually assaulting another airman, stealing his PlayStation

By Jennifer H. Svan

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The law center at Ramstein Air Base, Germany. A military judge here, found Airman 1st Class Jordan Hickman guilty of sexual assault and larceny on Wednesday, June 19, 2019 and sentenced him Thursday to three years in prison, a dishonorable discharge and an order to forfeit all pay and allowances.

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany — After sexually assaulting a drunk airman in the airman’s own dormitory bed last year, Airman 1st Class Jordan Hickman left the victim’s door as he found it — cracked open — and left, carrying a PlayStation console under his arm.

Video footage from a security camera would show Hickman spent 19 minutes in the victim’s room after closing the door and turning off the lights inside, as described at a general court-martial at Ramstein this week.

On Wednesday, a military judge found Hickman guilty of sexual assault and larceny.

Hickman, a member of the 86th Vehicle Readiness Squadron, was sentenced Thursday morning to three years in prison, a punishment that also includes a dishonorable discharge and an order to forfeit all pay and allowances.

Hickman, 20, will also have to register as a sex offender.

He faced up to 30 years in prison, the maximum confinement for sexual assault under military law.

The defense characterized the case as “two young men” drinking alcohol and “experimenting.” They raised the possibility that the victim, who by all witness accounts was highly intoxicated, may have consented to a sexual act while in an alcohol-induced blackout, which would explain why he had no memory of the event the next day.

But the government said it was implausible to think the victim suddenly woke up and agreed to sex with someone he hardly knew after he was left passed out on his dormitory bed.

“This is worse than facing an attacker in the bushes,” prosecutor Maj. Matthew Tusing said. “He couldn’t even fight back.”

The assault occurred after a raucous dorm party that began on May 4, 2018, one teeming with alcohol and upward of 75 people, according to court testimony.

The victim wore a Chewbacca one-piece costume to the party since it was Star Wars Day. He testified he drank eight to nine red Solo Cups of “jungle juice” — the party beverage consisting of rum, vodka, tequila and gin, diluted with Hawaiian Punch and chunks of fruit.

One of the victim’s last memories from the evening, he testified, was standing up on a table and saying, “May the Fourth be with you,” a moment that was recorded on Snapchat and played in court.

Hickman was also at the party and said to be drinking. He was among the airmen who helped carry the victim, whom by this time was having trouble walking, back to his dormitory room.

<https://www.stripes.com/news/ramstein-airman-guilty-of-sexually-assaulting-another-airman-stealing-his-playstation-1.586795>

The victim was left on his bed. His door was left cracked open, so airmen could check on him, according to court testimony.

The next day, after the victim woke up, he testified to feeling pain when trying to use the bathroom.

He walked to Security Forces and ended up at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center. Hickman's DNA from bodily fluids was found on the victim.

Video footage from the security camera in the hallway outside the victim's dormitory room tied Hickman to the crime scene.

Soon after helping the victim into his room and leaving with everyone else, Hickman was seen entering the victim's room again — this time alone — and closing the door behind him.

His behavior at the door was telling, lawyers for the government said.

"He does not knock," Tusing said, addressing Air Force Judge Lt. Col. Christina Jimenez, "He walks right in. They are strangers.

"When he left, he left with the lights off and the door cracked."

Hickman knew the victim "was passed out when he arrived; he knew he was passed out when he left," Tusing said.

Hickman in a statement before the judge tearfully apologized for his actions.

"My intent was to make sure (the victim) was OK," he said. "After arriving there, I made poor choices."

The victim also addressed the court, describing bouts of anxiety and trouble sleeping since the assault.

"I will never outlive, outgrow or forget this incident," he said.

svan.jennifer@stripes.com

Twitter: [@stripesktown](https://twitter.com/stripesktown)