

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.

An Army first: Two sisters attain general's rank [Tom Vanden Brook, *USA TODAY*, 5 September 2019]

- Maj. Gen. Maria Barrett and younger sister Brig. Gen. Paula Lodi are each accomplished in their own fields. But together they have become the first two sisters, the Army believes, to attain the general's rank in the service's 244-year history.
- Overall, women make up more than 16% of the military's active-duty force of 1.3 million. Women account for 69 of the 417 generals and admirals.
- The sisters' achievement is a remarkable milestone for women in the military, said Melissa Dalton, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and a former Defense Department official. She put it in the class of retired Army Gen. Ann Dunwoody, the first woman in any service to attain four stars.

[An Army first: Two sisters attain general's rank](#)

Jury awards Marine Corps family more than \$2 million for mold, health issues in privatized housing [Karen Jowers, *Military Times*, 6 September 2019]

- A jury in San Diego has awarded a Marine Corps family more than \$2 million in connection with [mold contamination and other issues](#) in their residence in a military privatized housing community.
- Staff Sgt. Matthew Charvat, his wife, and two children alleged that San Diego Family Housing and Lincoln Military Property Management were negligent in addressing a number of problems in their residence in Gateway Village, including "visible microbial growth and contamination," water damage, elevated levels of moisture inside the home, deteriorated and crumbling drywall, defective appliances, and a "horrible, musty odor throughout the interior living spaces."
- The case could have broader implications for other military families who have reported problems with their housing. "I think we're going to be seeing more of this. Based on the families who are reaching out to me, I have a sense there will be a number of class action lawsuits," said Darlena Brown, an Army wife who is founder and president of the Military Housing Advocacy Network.

[Jury awards Marine Corps family more than \\$2 million for mold, health issues in privatized housing](#)

Post-9/11 Vets Bear More Mental, Physical Battle Scars than Prior Generations: Pew Study [Richard Sisk, *Military.com*, 10 September 2019]

- Those who went to war after Sept. 1, 2001, are different than the generations of veterans who went before them, and are "more likely to [bear the scars](#) of battle," both physical and mental.
- "Their collective experiences—from deployment to combat to the transition back to civilian life—are markedly different from those who served in previous eras," according to a unique [survey](#) by the nonpartisan Pew Research Center, released Tuesday on the eve of the 18th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks.
- According to Pew's statistics, those who served after 9/11 now make up about one-fifth of the nation's more than 20 million veterans. About 75% of them deployed at least once, compared to 58% of pre-9/11 veterans, and they were twice as likely to have served in a combat zone, the survey found.

[Post-9/11 Vets Bear More Mental, Physical Battle Scars than Prior Generations: Pew Study](#)

CULTURE

[18 years later, America vows to ‘never forget’ 9/11](#) [Karen Matthews and Jennifer Peltz, *The Associated Press*, 2019-09-11]

Americans commemorated 9/11 with solemn ceremonies and vows Wednesday to “never forget” 18 years after the deadliest terror attack on American soil.

Nearly 3,000 people were killed when terrorist-piloted planes slammed into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and the field in Pennsylvania.

SEE ALSO:

[US to commemorate 9/11 as its aftermath extends and evolves](#) [*The Associated Press*, 2019-09-11]

[18 years after Sept. 11, the terror threat remains](#) [*Air Force Times*, 2019-09-10] [OPINION]

[How to bridge the divide between civilians and the military, first responders](#) [Kevin M. Schmiegel and Patrick A. Burke, *Military Times*, 2019-09-10] [OPINION]

For 18 years our nation has been at war. In the face of conflict and adversity at home and abroad, brave Americans have volunteered to serve not only in our armed forces but as first responders in thousands of communities across the country. Between them, more than 4.4 million men and women have taken an oath to uphold and defend the Constitution and pledged to protect the freedoms and securities we enjoy as Americans.

Since 9/11, however, observers have acknowledged [a widening gap](#) of “understanding” between the 2.1 million Americans who serve in our all-volunteer military force and the rest of the population. While our nation’s longest war continues and hundreds of thousands of service members still and will continue to deploy each year, a majority of military families feel increasingly isolated from their communities and disconnected from their civilian counterparts.

DISCRIMINATION

[The ‘naturally disappointing’ results of new Wyoming study: Native American students face greater discipline](#) [Kristin Lam, *USA TODAY*, 2019-09-09]

Wyoming teachers disproportionately suspend [Native American students](#) from school compared to their peers, especially in cases where educators use their own judgment, according to a new state study.

[Schools discipline indigenous students at higher rates](#) for their share of the enrollment, according to the report by the Wyoming Community Foundation, suggesting that teachers’ unconscious assumptions hurt some students’ academic performance.

[The tools of character assassination](#) [Jason Lamb, *Air Force Times*, 2019-09-06] [OPINION]

In my capacity as [“Ned Stark,”](#) I have received e-mails from several individuals stationed at different bases across the Air Force asking for my help because “the system” has failed them. These individuals represent just about every rank and demographic, even colonels. The Inspector General’s Office and the

Equal Opportunity Office exist to prevent abuses through education and investigation of reports of misconduct that fall within their respective purviews. Together, they are supposed to address times when people do not conduct themselves as they should.

Unfortunately, unethical leaders and disgruntled subordinates have weaponized IG and EO processes to punish people for personal reasons. Ironically, the very safeguards that are supposed to ensure a safe and fair work environment are being used to create an [atmosphere of fear](#) and intimidation. I'm writing because it's become clear to me that the system is failing both the accused and the claimant.

DIVERSITY

[An Army first: Two sisters attain general's rank](#) [Tom Vanden Brook, USA TODAY, 2019-09-05]

Maj. Gen. Maria Barrett and younger sister Brig. Gen. Paula Lodi are each accomplished in their own fields. But together they have become the first two sisters, the Army believes, to attain the general's rank in the service's 244-year history.

[What the Army and Navy Can Learn From the Air Force's Female Secretaries](#) [Rachel S. Cohen, Air Force Magazine, 2019-09-11]

The Air Force may soon welcome its third consecutive female secretary at a time when the nation has yet to see a woman as Army or Navy secretary or as secretary of defense.

The Senate Armed Services Committee will hold a Sept. 12 confirmation hearing for Barbara Barrett, President Donald Trump's nominee to be the next Air Force secretary. Barrett is a former Federal Aviation Administration deputy administrator and former chairman of the board of trustees for the nonprofit Aerospace Corp., and a past member of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) during George H.W. Bush's presidency.

SEE ALSO:

[Air Force nominee lays out her approach to space](#) [C4isrnet, 2019-09-12]

[New Coast Guard Academy superintendent says his job is to "seek out the blind spots"](#) [Julia Bergman, The Day (New London, Conn.), 2019-09-09]

The new superintendent of the Coast Guard Academy, just over 100 days into the job, said the academy has done much over the years to increase the diversity of its student body. Women now make up 40 percent of the roughly 1,000 cadets on campus, and minorities constitute 32 percent.

[Rear Adm. Bill] Kelly took over as superintendent in the midst of a [congressional probe](#) into the academy's handling of discrimination and harassment complaints, and a separate [review](#) by the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General into whether the academy has adequate processes in place for reporting, investigating and acting on such complaints.

MISCELLANEOUS

[Air Force commanders across the Pacific gather airmen to counter suicides](#)

[Matthew M. Burke, *Stars & Stripes*, 2019-09-06]

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Airmen in the Pacific have been meeting in recent weeks to discuss and hopefully curb suicide in the ranks, which is fast approaching 10-year highs and claims more servicemembers than combat operations in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan.

After the 78th Air Force suicide this year, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David Goldfein ordered a daylong halt in operations — a Resilience Tactical Pause — via a July 31 letter to wing commanders worldwide. Goldfein directed the leaders to gather their airmen — in both large and small groups — and hear from them what is behind the continuing high number of suicides.

[Jury awards Marine Corps family more than \\$2 million for mold, health issues in privatized housing](#) [Karen Jowers, *Military Times*, 2019-09-06]

A jury in San Diego has awarded a Marine Corps family more than \$2 million in connection with [mold contamination and other issues](#) in their residence in a military privatized housing community.

The case could have broader implications for other military families who have reported problems with their housing. “I think we’re going to be seeing more of this. Based on the families who are reaching out to me, I have a sense there will be a number of class action lawsuits,” said Darlena Brown, an Army wife who is founder and president of the Military Housing Advocacy Network.

[Most Army Families Say They’d Move Off-Base If They Could to Escape Poor Housing](#) [Richard Sisk, *Military.com*, 2019-09-09]

A large majority (64%) of Army military families would move off base if they could afford it to escape poor housing conditions, a lack of oversight by commanders, and the petty harassment of private housing managers, according to a report published Sept. 5 by the office of the Army Inspector General.

At 48 of 49 installations surveyed by the IG, residents in privatized housing cited concerns with “environmental” issues, including mold, lead-based paint, asbestos, water quality, open sewage and radon gas, the report states.

Families who complained to property managers said they often faced retaliation, reprisals and petty harassment from the private management companies, according to the report.

[New association of privatized housing companies pushing back on some reforms](#) [Karen Jowers, *Military Times*, 2019-09-11]

In the wake of withering criticism about how they have maintained the military base housing they run, five companies have formed a new coalition to represent their interests. And some have ramped up how much they spend to lobby Congress.

One of their first actions of this coalition, called the Military Housing Association, has been to meet with and send a letter to congressional staff members voicing objections to some of the [proposals for](#)

[military housing reform](#). That's raised the concern of some advocates, who are already alarmed by the Trump administration's objections to the changes.

[New blood test could help identify troops and veterans with PTSD](#) [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 2019-09-10]

Physicians could potentially one day identify veterans with [post-traumatic stress disorder](#) through a quick [blood test](#) instead of complex psychological tests, thanks to new research from the Army and outside biometrics experts published for the first time Monday.

The study, which appeared in the [journal *Molecular Psychiatry*](#), found a set of 27 blood markers which helped identify patients suffering from PTSD. Researchers said the findings support past hypotheses that the disorder "affects not just the brain, but the entire body."

[Post-9/11 Vets Bear More Mental, Physical Battle Scars than Prior Generations: Pew Study](#) [Richard Sisk, *Military.com*, 2019, 09-10]

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"Their collective experiences -- from deployment to combat to the transition back to civilian life -- are markedly different from those who served in previous eras," according to a unique [survey](#) by the nonpartisan Pew Research Center, released Tuesday on the eve of the 18th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks.

According to Pew's statistics, those who served after 9/11 now make up about one-fifth of the nation's more than 20 million veterans. About 75% of them deployed at least once, compared to 58% of pre-9/11 veterans, and they were twice as likely to have served in a combat zone, the survey found.

SEE ALSO:

[Veterans with PTSD, anxiety turn to beekeeping for relief](#) [*The Associated Press*, 2019-09-11]

[Why younger veterans more likely to struggle after leaving the military](#) [*Military Times*, 2019-09-10]

[My Best Friend Died by Suicide. I Wish I Had Seen the Warning Signs.](#) [*The New York Times*, 2019-09-10]

[This former Ranger was just nominated to be the next Secretary of the Army](#) [Haley Britzky, *Task & Purpose*, 2019-09-09]

On Monday, the 45-year-old Army Under Secretary [Ryan McCarthy] was nominated by President Donald Trump to be the top civilian in charge of the U.S. Army, replacing Mark Esper as Army Secretary, who was [confirmed as Secretary of Defense](#) in July.

It's not McCarthy's first time in the top job. The Chicago native had been temporarily in the role of Army Secretary twice now — once in the fall of 2017 before Esper was confirmed, and again recently when Esper was named the Acting Defense Secretary.

SEE ALSO:

[Former Ranger Ryan McCarthy Hopes to Lead Army Through Human Connection](#) [*Military.com*, 2019-09-09]

[Why younger veterans more likely to struggle after leaving the military](#) [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 2019-09-10]

Younger veterans are more likely than previous generations of servicemembers to report problems [readjusting to civilian life](#), with about 1 in 6 calling the transition very difficult, according to a new survey released today.

The survey from the [Pew Research Center](#), which includes responses from 1,284 veterans collected in May and June, also found that one-third of veterans reported they had trouble paying their bills in the first few years after leaving the military, and about 40 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans believed their deployment had a negative effect on [their mental health](#).

MISCONDUCT

['Definitely suspicious': Investigation into patient deaths at West Virginia VA hospital expands](#) [Ken Alltucker, *USA TODAY*, 2019-09-10]

A federal probe into about 10 suspicious deaths at a Veterans Affairs hospital in West Virginia is expanding, with investigators contacting three more families of patients who died there, according to a lawyer representing some of the relatives.

The VA's Office of Inspector General has been looking into the deaths at Louis A. Johnson VA Medical Center in Clarksburg, West Virginia. At least two of those deaths were reclassified as homicides after the bodies were exhumed.

[Lawmakers want closer tracking of White supremacy, Nazi sympathizers in the military](#) [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 2019-09-12]

Senate appropriators included in their \$695 billion defense spending plan for fiscal 2020 a mandate for military officials to more closely track and respond to incidents of [White supremacy](#) and [pro-Nazi activity](#) in the ranks, which lawmakers have labeled a growing concern for the services.

The provision would require the defense secretary to submit a report to Congress on any violations regarding Defense Department policies on "White supremacist, neo-Nazi, terrorist, gang and other extremist affiliations by service members and recruits."

SEXISM

[Two Years After Nude Photo Scandal, Marines Assess Gender Issues in the Corps](#) [Gina Harkins, *Military.com*, 2019-09-07]

New [Marine Corps](#) survey data could give leaders a glimpse into whether women and others feel protected from discrimination two years after a [nude-photo scandal](#) exposed the way some men were mistreating their female colleagues.

[Marines](#) across the ranks said their service is no better or worse than those in the civilian job sector at dealing with issues such as gender relations, freedom from harassment, discrimination and fair performance evaluation. That's according to results from the Fiscal 2018 Exit and Milestone Longitudinal Survey (EMLS), which Marines are asked to take at different stages in their careers.

SEXUAL ASSAULT/HARASSMENT

[What I Wish I'd Known About Sexual Assault in the Military](#) [Sandra Sidi, *The Atlantic Magazine*, October 2019 Issue]

In 2008, the Pentagon ramped up efforts to prevent sexual assault and make offenders more accountable. Since then there has been a substantial drop in incidents: from approximately 34,200 in 2006 to 14,900 in 2016, based on a confidential survey. Yet recent data suggest that the number has risen, with 20,500 victims of sexual assault in 2018. It's hard to know exactly what to make of this, but one finding is particularly surprising: Despite the #MeToo movement, service members were somewhat less likely to report an assault in 2018 than they were in 2016, based on comparing figures in the confidential survey with reported incidents.